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Cornelia Connelly

THE LIFE OF CORNELIA CONNELLY

1809–1879

FOUNDRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

BY

A RELIGIOUS OF THE SOCIETY

WITH A PREFACE BY

CARDINAL GASQUET

"Everyone that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother *or wife or children* or lands for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting."—Matt. xix. 29.

WITH PORTRAIT

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In conformity with the Decrees of Pope Urban VIII the writers of this biography declare that they fully submit to the judgment of the Holy See everything written therein concerning extraordinary grace vouchsafed to its subject.

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TO

THE EARLY MEMBERS OF
THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

WHO CAST IN THEIR LOT WITH IT
BEFORE THE RULE WAS CONFIRMED
AND TO WHOSE UNFAILING PERSEVERANCE AND
INVINCIBLE DEVOTEDNESS, IN THE FACE OF
COUNTLESS DIFFICULTIES, THEIR SUCCESSORS
OWE, UNDER GOD, THE STRONG YET GENTLE
GOVERNMENT UNDER WHICH THEY LIVE, THE
UNITY, PEACE AND LOVE WHICH BIND THEM
TOGETHER, THE LIBERTY OF SPIRIT AND HIGH
IDEALS IN WHICH THEY REJOICE, THIS BOOK IS
RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1924.

PREFACE

I HAVE been asked to write a brief preface to this Life of Mother Cornelia Connelly, the venerated Foundress of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. I very gladly accept this task, if only to be able to express my own deep appreciation of the high personal qualities, the manifest holiness and the indefatigable labours for God of this courageous woman. The Life must be read to understand fully how the expressions I have used are not in any way exaggerated, and I feel sure that all who peruse these pages will acknowledge that there are few existing biographies of any servant of God which are so full of incident, instruction and religious edification as may be found in them. There is much, too, that is quite out of the ordinary. There is romance and almost tragedy. The whole is a record of intense personal suffering borne with the fortitude of a " valiant woman," because it was God's holy Will. There is success also, but success only valued by Cornelia Connelly because it too was according to His Almighty Will, and for the furtherance of His glory. It was ever His work, and His work only, that she desired, and for this she was ready to sacrifice with cheerful heart even her dearest wishes. As I read these pages I feel sure that few women could ever have worked under more complete submission to God's Providence than Mother Connelly displayed during the whole course of her life. Acting on this principle she was always able to show to the outside world, and even to those most intimate with her, that complete self-possession, cheerfulness and calmness for which she was remarkable.

It is quite impossible to condense this life into a few pages without doing it an injustice, and hence I will merely indicate here a few facts regarding it.

Cornelia Peacock was born at Philadelphia in 1809, the daughter of one of the best families in that city, and belonging to the Protestant Episcopal Church. She was possessed of great personal beauty, and of abilities out of the common which were cultivated under the best masters. In process of time Cornelia Peacock married a young Protestant minister, named Pierce Connelly, and went with him to Natchez. Here they were led to make inquiries into the principles of the Catholic religion, and were both converted to the Faith.

After a visit to Europe the Connellys settled at Grand Coteau, in Louisiana, and lived for some time a happy domestic life with their children. But suddenly Pierce Connelly announced that he felt a call from God to become a priest, and that in consequence it would be necessary for his wife to take vows as a religious in some convent. This separation was wholly unexpected and undesired by Mrs. Connelly, but she resigned herself to the sacrifice of her domestic happiness if it should be the Will of God to call her husband to the sacred ministry.

The case, of course, had to be considered at Rome, and thither Cornelia was summoned after her husband had preceded her to make his petition. It was at length arranged that she should enter the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the Trinità dei Monti, as a postulant, and after a solemn deed of separation had been drawn up and approved by the ecclesiastical authorities and she had bound herself by a vow of chastity, Pierce Connelly was ordained priest.

At this time Bishop Wiseman was eagerly looking for some way to raise the education of the daughters of the old English Catholic families, and he saw in Mrs. Connelly one pre-eminently suited for this work. He was encouraged by the Pope and Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect of Propaganda. Mrs. Connelly's personal wishes would have led her to

America, but the Holy Father determined otherwise, telling her that her work would spread to America, but from England. She was then instructed to draw up Rules and Constitutions for her future Society.

This she did with the help of two Jesuit Fathers, adapting her Rules from the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

When Mrs. Connelly reached England and took up work under the direction of Bishop Wiseman he approved these Constitutions, and through all subsequent difficulties Mother Connelly clung to them as embodying the spirit of the Society as she conceived it.

It was not long before grave and unforeseen difficulties arose. Pierce Connelly conceived the insane and impossible idea that, as the husband of the Foundress, he had the right to direct the Society. He even went so far as to present to Propaganda a set of Constitutions which he had himself drawn up without any reference to Mother Connelly. His action became known to her only when these Constitutions were sent to the English Bishops for examination. She was, of course, obliged to protest that her husband had no authority to interfere in any way with the Society. Pierce Connelly now showed himself in his true colours. After carrying away their children abroad, he publicly apostatised, and then brought a suit before the Court of Arches to coerce the Foundress to return to live with him. Though he was not able to succeed in this, her distress and anxiety were naturally intense, and were increased by the fact that many, even among Catholics, considered that she was, in some way or other, to blame for the scandal. This feeling of suspicion and unfriendliness towards her remained for many years, and in some quarters continued, I fancy, up to the time of her death.

Another cause of great trouble to her, and of much unmerited condemnation of her and her Society, was what was known as the St. Leonards Case. Through Bishop Wiseman, Mother Connelly had received the offer of a

partially built convent and grounds at St. Leonards. After consideration she accepted it from the Rev. Mr. Jones, who had the legal disposal of it. She began there at once a school for young ladies, and amongst the first pupils were two of my own sisters, from whom I heard much of the convent. It was there that I, as a very small boy, once saw the Mother Foundress. One afternoon she took the children for a picnic to a place called "Old Roar." The memory of this curious name, and of the kindness and cheerfulness of Mother Connelly, has remained with me ever since.

It would be useless here to go into the difficulties which were raised by the congregation of Hastings, after the death of Mr. Jones, regarding their supposed rights to the property in the hands of Mother Connelly and the community.

The case went on for years and was the source of much ill-feeling and the occasion of some strongly worded letters. It was settled finally by the Holy See after a full and careful investigation, and I am satisfied that anyone who will read the account printed in this Life [1] will arrive at the conclusion that justice was done. The calmness and perfect charity with which Mother Connelly bore this long-sustained quarrel and the calumnies which were sent broadcast against her, are undoubted proofs of her trust in God's Providence and Justice.

Another great trial which Mother Connelly was called upon to bear—undoubtedly the greatest of all—regarded the long delay in the approbation of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and the confirmation of its Rules by the authorities in Rome. The whole position had been rendered obscure by the action of Pierce Connelly in posing as the Founder of the Society and in presenting for approbation his own Constitutions. A visit of Mother

[1] The documents have been omitted in this abridged edition. They may be found in the original edition of *The Life of Cornelia Connelly* (Longmans, 1922).

Connelly to Rome failed to clear up the misunderstanding. She returned to England hoping that the matter would be settled promptly. Months and even years passed and nothing apparently was done. After long and anxious waiting, and events which would take too long to chronicle in this brief sketch, the Bishop of the diocese suddenly produced an entirely new set of Rules and ordered that they should be adopted on trial for at least three years. Mother Connelly obeyed, as she always did, the authority of the Bishop. At the end of the period of trial the Chapter of the Society was called together and unanimously declared that these new Rules could not be accepted. Then came delay after delay, and, before the Rules were finally confirmed by the Holy See, the Mother Foundress died. It is a tragic story. She had longed for this seal upon her work, and she was denied the consolation of obtaining it. But the fortitude with which she bore this great cross, and the supreme trust she had in God's Providence during all the long-drawn trial, must certainly have added much to her merit in the sight of the Almighty.

Two other matters only I wish to refer to. The first regards her spiritual letters and advice to her daughters. They will well repay reading and study, for they breathe in every line the spirit of God, and make us see how very close her soul was to Him.

The second regards the way in which she prepared herself and her religious for the work of teaching, to which by God's Providence they were called. She left nothing to chance, and saw to even the most minute matters herself. Her energy was prodigious and she gave herself no rest. Accident or failure never discouraged her, but only proved a stimulus to greater exertions. The principles she laid down to guide her religious in teaching are as sound to-day as they were when she framed them sixty years ago. Trained so thoroughly by her, it is little wonder that the Society has succeeded so well, and

occupies the place it does to-day in the educational world.

Mother Connelly was indeed a wonderful woman and a true saint, closely united to God, ready and even anxious to suffer for Him, and wholly resigned to His Will.

A. Card. Gasquet.

Rome : *St. Benedict's Day*, 1922.

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To every man there openeth
A Way and Ways, and a Way,
And the High Soul climbs the High way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro,
But to every man there openeth
A High way and a Low,
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.

JOHN OXENHAM : *The King's Highway.*

THE LIFE OF CORNELIA CONNELLY

[1809–1879]

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE—CONVERSION

1809–1838

The years of man are the looms of God
Let down from the place of the sun.

A. B. Chester.

The poets' image of life as a tapestry being woven by men is a conception pregnant with thought and beauty. Here on earth we see but the wrong side of the great tapestry on which the pageant of human history is being slowly depicted. The workers are ignorant of the effect of their work, but not so the Artist. With unerring skill He chooses the colours and guides the forms. One day the whole will be turned over, and we shall each recognise our own little scrap of colour, dark or gay.

To some is given but a simple task, and they finish it quietly and pass on. To others are allotted vast perplexities to unravel and sharp angles to turn. Their lives wind round the lives of many others and link together hidden destinies. Of this kind is the life of Cornelia Connelly. Her story tells of her gradual formation and

delicate adjustment to a work which appeared utterly remote from the circumstances in which her career began. It would have been impossible to foresee that religious life was to be invigorated and Catholic education revived in England by means of the wife of a Protestant clergyman living in the United States. Yet, through a series of events as unlooked for by herself as by anyone else, this result was reached, and her work is fruitful in two continents to-day.

It seems as if a wealth of gifts had been bestowed upon her merely that she might taste and see that they were good, and then, leaving one after another, might learn that God was better. Into her life were put riches and talents and beauty and intellectual enjoyments, a devoted husband, lovely children, and opportunities for useful work. To these were added, after a time, the happy security of true religion, the interest of travel and the joy of many friends.

When she was thirty-one years of age, the process of despoilment began. Riches had disappeared before, but they had not been a part of her true life. Then her husband asked her to set him free for the service of God. Five years of delays and suspense inured her to intimate suffering. A definite apostolic work was laid upon her, and, at a moment when financial difficulties and responsibilities of many kinds were weighing heavily, the tragedy of her life crashed down upon her. Henceforth her remaining years were, without fault of hers, shadowed by a dreadful scandal, which hung intangibly about her name and her Order. But those who would for this reason condemn her work, or deny that it was inspired and blessed by God, must take their stand with those who were scandalised by the Passion of Christ, for the proximate occasion of that also was a terrible sin of treason.

Such a career at first sight seems a martyrdom. A martyr in heart and soul Mother Connelly certainly was,

but not a sad or reluctant victim. To one who looks long enough upon the crucifix any sacrifice may become possible and even welcome. There is a region of the spirit in which suffering and bereavement are transfigured by a ray of eternity and may be seen as joy and love and life. On these heights it was given to Mother Connelly to dwell, and because her soul moved among the beautiful things of God, she was distinguished by a spirit of peace and joy.

The bright, loving and lovable disposition which was hers by nature was never dimmed or enfeebled by sorrow, but gave forth a clearer light and a warmer sympathy as the years went by, until she was bidden by God to lay down her cross and come, and she answered gladly to His call. Her life lasted just over seventy years, the last thirty-three being consecrated to the service of God in the founding of a religious Order.

. . . . . .

Cornelia Augusta Peacock (afterwards Mrs. Connelly) was born on January 15th, 1809, of a prominent family in Philadelphia. The family of her father, Ralph Peacock, came originally from Yorkshire in England, and that of her mother, whose maiden name was Mary Swope, from the German Rhineland. The latter had previously married a Jamaican planter, John Bowen, by whom she had two children, John and Isabella, later Mrs. Montgomery. To her second husband she bore three sons and three daughters, of whom the youngest was Cornelia. All the children were gifted with talents and beauty, Cornelia perhaps the most generously of all. We know very little of the family life—only that it was happy, loving and free, a source of bright memories to Cornelia in after years. She herself was a lively, high-spirited, venturesome child, independent, strong-willed, yet possessing a sweetness of disposition and a clearness of judgment that made even her elders turn to her when they needed consolation or advice.

It was not long before her sunny childhood was overshadowed by the sterner realities of life. Her father died when she was nine years old, and her mother when she was fourteen. The family was thus broken up, and on her mother's death Cornelia was adopted by her half-sister, Mrs. Montgomery, who was living in Philadelphia, and who bestowed the utmost care upon her education. Though her environment was perhaps rather worldly, Cornelia had been brought up to be high-principled, truthful and kind. In religious matters, apparently, she and her family troubled little about dogma, and took for granted that all the Protestant denominations with which they were acquainted were branches of the true Church. Catholicism alone was outside the pale. Cornelia, with her natural intensity of disposition, went further than her relatives in prejudice against it, and "thought all Catholic priests were instruments of the devil, if not the devil himself." These rather extreme views were fostered by the historical works which she now began to read with avidity. Under Mrs. Montgomery's care she had lessons at home with professors and tutors, and made rapid progress in all her studies. She learned to converse in several languages, and became proficient in drawing and music. The noble gifts of her mind and character were enhanced by great beauty, a most attractive gaiety, and above all by a winning personality which made her a favourite wherever she went.

Mrs. Montgomery naturally looked forward to a brilliant match for her young ward. She was keenly disappointed, therefore, when Cornelia became engaged to a young Episcopalian clergyman. She declared that she would never consent to their marriage, and even forbade him her house. There is a firm look about Mrs. Montgomery's mouth in her photograph, which suggests that she was not one whose orders could be trifled with. Cornelia, however, was equally firm. She applied to another sister, Mrs. Duval, for hospitality, and it was

from her house that the marriage took place on December 1st, 1831.

In spite of Mrs. Montgomery's disappointed ambitions, the Rev. Pierce Connelly was apparently fitted in every way, except that of fame already achieved, to secure the happiness of his young wife. He was her senior by five years, a man of university education and distinguished talents, enthusiastic, ambitious and with a singular power of attracting affection. In addition to these qualifications, he possessed, if not a large fortune, at least a sufficiency of worldly goods. Cornelia was now twenty-two years of age, and is described as slight in figure, rather below the middle height, with a profusion of dark wavy hair. Her face was remarkably beautiful, the forehead high and broad, the complexion pale, the eyes very dark and brilliant. Her whole bearing showed sweetness of disposition and natural distinction of manner.

Shortly after the wedding, Mr. Connelly accepted the rectorship of Trinity Church, Natchez, Mississippi, where his family had some property, and left Philadelphia with his wife to take up his residence there.

Cornelia seems to have filled with complete success the position in which she was now placed, and before long Mr. and Mrs. Connelly were firmly established in the affection of the people at Natchez. Their home was a centre of prosperity and joy, and when a son, Mercer, and later a daughter, Adeline, were born to them their happiness seemed complete.

Both husband and wife had that extraordinary gift of personal charm which makes so much difference to the life of its possessor. In him it showed in the interest and natural eloquence of his conversation, in her it was rather a fresh, irrepressible gaiety, and a sympathy which took so profound a part in the joys and sorrows of everyone around her that no room was left for self-consciousness.

But a disturbing influence was soon to break in upon the even current of their lives. Pierce Connelly was

induced by some attacks upon the Catholic religion to examine into the matter himself. The investigation led him to doubt the security of his own position as an Episcopalian minister. Under these circumstances he felt that he could not continue to preach and teach. In August 1835, therefore, he wrote to his bishop to acquaint him with his state of mind and to resign his parish. Cornelia's love and admiration of her husband were unbounded. No thought of herself or of their worldly prospects hindered her concurrence in his upright and courageous action. To her sister, Mrs. Duval, she wrote (October 1835): "The course which he has taken honestly and openly before God and man at the expense of his worldly interests cannot but be respected by all who are blessed with strict principles of honesty; and I am proud to say that, against my prejudices, and in spite of the horror which I have always nurtured for the Catholic faith, I am ready at once to submit to whatever my loved husband believes to be the path of duty."

It was but natural that these sentiments should gradually lead Cornelia to moderate her own religious views and to enter into those of her husband. Together they read, discussed and prayed, and before long both arrived at the conclusion that truth and salvation were to be found in the Catholic Church alone. We have no direct record of the arguments which appealed most strongly to Cornelia, but probably a statement made by Pierce Connelly represents the attitude of both at this time. "I became a Roman Catholic," he said, "wholly and solely on the ground of there being amongst men a living, infallible interpreter of the mind of God, with divine jurisdiction and with authority to enforce submission to it."

There was no precipitation in their action, and certainly there was no human motive to urge them forward. There were many, in the case of Mr. Connelly especially, to hold them back. He had the confidence and affection of

his parishioners, he was in favour with his Bishop, and was considered to be on the high road to ecclesiastical preferment. His brothers used every effort to dissuade him from his purpose. Cornelia's family, too, were horror-stricken and sent her long letters of warning and argument. But with both husband and wife religious convictions prevailed over all worldly considerations. In the autumn of 1835 Mr. Connelly renounced his Anglican Orders and bade farewell to his parishioners, who presented him with a gold cup as a token of their respect and affection. It was necessary, of course, to leave Natchez, and Mr. Connelly determined to visit Rome and there to seek admission into the Church. He engaged berths on a vessel bound for Europe, and started with his wife and children for New Orleans. When they arrived there, obstacles arose which obliged them to postpone their voyage for a short time. They were thus faced with an unexpected delay in their reception into the Church. Cornelia, who seems by now to have become more eager than her husband in her desire to be a Catholic, wished to be received at once. Mr. Connelly preferred to wait until they should reach Rome. There may have been some lingering doubts or hesitation in his mind, or he may have set his heart upon a definite plan of procedure which he saw no reason for altering. They agreed to act separately. Mrs. Connelly presented herself to the Bishop of New Orleans and made known her desires. He was satisfied with her knowledge and dispositions and received her into the Church without further delay. She made her abjuration and received her first Holy Communion in the Cathedral, her husband being present. Later, the Bishop, describing the event to her brother-in-law, Mr. John Connelly, declared that he could never forget her fervour nor the big tears he saw streaming down her face as he gave her the Body of Christ.

It was about the middle of December 1835 when the Connellys set sail for Europe. They reached Rome on

February 25th, 1836, and took apartments in the Via della Croce. Among the first to show them kindly attention were the Earl of Shrewsbury and his family, who were staying in Rome at the time. They called upon the Connellys soon after their arrival, and a lasting friendship between them began. On Palm Sunday, March 27th, Pierce Connelly made his abjuration, Lord Shrewsbury standing sponsor for him, and on Maundy Thursday, March 31st, Mr. and Mrs. Connelly together received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Mrs. Connelly always spoke of this visit to Rome as marking an epoch in her life. She and her husband had undertaken the journey with the intention of entering more fully into the spirit and practice of the Catholic Church, and they at once appreciated the atmosphere in which they now found themselves. They had been fortunate in their letters of introduction, which secured them a welcome from the Borghese family, placing them at once, not only in the best Roman society, but also in the most perfect Catholic surroundings.[1] Great interest was taken in the American converts, and they met with kindness and hospitality on all sides.

Mrs. Connelly revelled in the magnificent buildings, the great works of art, and the ruins of the past. But above all these pleasures was the new sense of safety and peace that flooded her soul and the joy with which she realised that she had come home to her true Mother, the Church of God. Together with her husband she was admitted to an audience with the Holy Father, Gregory XVI, who received them with paternal kindness.

From letters written by Pierce Connelly at this time, we learn that Cornelia was a universal favourite, and that her beauty and talents were admired by all. Her

[1] Lord Shrewsbury's daughter, Lady Gwendalin Talbot, had married the Prince of Sulmona, afterwards Prince Borghese; she was now living with her husband's family in Rome and spreading around her the sweet odour of her saintly life.

portrait was executed in crayons by the Princess Sciarra Colonna, and the President of the Academy of St. Luke declared before her that her profile was more beautiful than that of any Grecian model. "But I trust," adds her husband, "indeed I am sure, that her Christian feelings are far too strong for her ever to be carried away either by love of admiration or love of society." Again he writes that he is making excursions into different parts of Italy, and that Cornelia, in his absence, is constantly at the Borghese Palace, that the family wish her to make her home there with the children, but that she prefers to remain in her own apartments in the Palazzo Simonetti.

In August Mr. Connelly accepted an invitation from Lord Shrewsbury to spend some weeks in England. He was introduced to the Jesuit Fathers at Stonyhurst, and to many of the Catholic families of the north. He writes (August 8th, 1836) to his brother John describing Stonyhurst College, and the warm reception that was accorded to him there, that he was placed beside the President at the Exhibition dinner, and was toasted "as a celebrity."

"In my thanks," he continues, "I gave them Lord Shrewsbury's name, as it is publicly known that I came to England through his invitation on a visit. Through his great kindness I have formed some valuable acquaintances and have spent my time as delightfully as I could anywhere away from dear Nelie and the children. You may be sure I miss them dreadfully, and sometimes cannot help being quite low-spirited without them. I have not been able to accept all the invitations I have had from great people."

Meanwhile his wife was quietly and happily storing her mind with spiritual riches and devoting herself to the care of her children. Mercer, now aged four, could say his childish prayers, and go with his mother to visit Little Jesus and His crib at Santa Maria Maggiore, to

which she had a great devotion. She began at this time to read the lives of the Saints. Those which impressed her most deeply were the lives of St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Sales and St. Francis of Assisi. As she read of their love for God and the great deeds which it prompted, her heart must have burned within her, for she was beginning to feel that of her too a great love was asked, now that she was within the family of the Saints.

The Connellys had left America with very indefinite plans as to the length of their absence, but in the spring of 1837 an epidemic of cholera obliged them to leave Rome. They decided to travel in Italy and Switzerland during the summer months, and to sail for America in the autumn. Early in May they started for Venice, spending some days at Terni, Perugia, Florence, Bologna and Ferrara on the way. After a short stay in Venice they left for Vienna, where on June 22nd their second son, John Henry, was born.

Notwithstanding the loss that Mr. Connelly had incurred by the resignation of his rectorship at Natchez, there had been no pecuniary anxiety hitherto, and up to the close of their European tour he drew a good income from landed property which he shared with his brothers. After some time spent in Vienna and Paris, however, unsatisfactory accounts of the family estate began to reach him, and his brothers wrote of serious losses and impending ruin. It became imperative to return home at once.

Mr. Connelly, now without a profession, was in great anxiety about the future, and not a little vague regarding possible expedients. He wrote from Paris in October begging his brother John to come to his aid by helping him to find "some clerkship in a bank, or drivership in a plantation, or mastership in a school." "In fine," he concludes, "any place whatsoever that will bring in annually a sum somewhat proportionate to our desires as well as our necessities."

The prospect of poverty had not apparently any great terror for Mrs. Connelly, for the letter continues: "Cornelia is dancing with delight at the thought of being so soon back in her own home. She is an angel of consolation." In fact, Cornelia had sadly missed during the last two years spent in palaces or hotels the interests and duties of home life.

They left Europe in November and reached New Orleans on January 7th, after a weary voyage of sixty-one days. Mr. Connelly wrote at once to his brother:

"We hope to be with you at Natchez as soon as this letter, provided we can get out of the hands of custom-house officers. Cornelia and the children are very well. She is more rejoiced than I can say over a return to our peaceful, quiet home life, though at the same time she can bravely look ahead to coming—I must not say storms—but times when we may find ourselves without a home wherein to live."

Pierce Connelly's was a temperament that easily rushed to extremes, and now he was viewing the future in the darkest hues, as we gather from the very dejected tone of his letters. The financial crisis, however, proved to be really serious, and it needed all the energy of his wife's more evenly balanced character to tide over the difficult months that followed. Their position in Natchez was naturally a painful one under their altered circumstances, for their conversion to the Catholic Church appeared an incomprehensible folly to many of their former friends.

It was not until June 1838 that prospects brightened. The Rev. Father Point, S.J., rector of the College of St. Charles at Grand Coteau in Louisiana, was in need of a professor of English, and offered the post to Mr. Connelly. This was looked upon by both husband and wife as a direct answer to prayer. There was at Grand Coteau a beautiful convent of the Sacred Heart, a great attrac-

tion to Mrs. Connelly, who had become acquainted with the religious of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità dei Monti in Rome, and held them in the highest esteem.

On June 24th Mr. and Mrs. Connelly with their three children arrived at Grand Coteau, and took possession of a cottage belonging to the convent, which they named "Gracemere." Mr. Connelly entered immediately on his new duties, and Cornelia sought the acquaintance of the nuns. On discovering her musical talents they offered her pupils for singing, the pianoforte and the guitar. She gladly accepted the offer in order to increase the finances of the little home. She had a natural love for children, and they were always attracted to her. Mr. Connelly found his occupations at the College congenial and the companionship of the Fathers "delightful."

One of them, Father Abbadie, wrote as follows:

"Together with their little children, Mr. and Mrs. Connelly knelt at our church at the services. They edified us and the whole parish by the spectacle of their tender piety. Pierce Connelly went to confession to the Rev. Father de Theux, who made him fast rigorously all Lent. He loved to call the three years he spent amongst us in his humble abode at Gracemere, his hidden life. . . . Mrs. Connelly came to me to confession, and what a beautiful soul it was my task to direct! It was necessary for me in the first place to moderate her ardour for mortification and self-denial. In everything her obedience to me was perfect. Only a little more than two years a Catholic, she had already made great advance in the interior and spiritual life."

Their children were a delight to both. On July 22nd another daughter was born, and was baptised Mary Magdalen. She lived only a few weeks, and her death was a great grief to the mother.

Nevertheless, life shone brightly before Cornelia. Her home was full of happiness, for then, as always, she had

the gift of shedding joy around her. She was at peace in heart and soul. The recent troubles had cleared away, and everything presaged a still happier life on a higher spiritual plane. But for the second time God was about to interfere in her life, and lead her into paths she dreamed not of.

CHAPTER II

AT GRAND COTEAU

1838–1842

O ! break my heart; but break it as a field
Is by the plough upbroken for the corn;
O ! break it as the buds, by green leaf sealed,
Are to unloose the golden blossoms torn :
Love would I offer unto love's great Master,
Set free the odour, break the alabaster.

THOMAS TOKE LYNCH.

CORNELIA CONNELLY was at this period receiving great graces. It was the spring time of her spiritual life, and God was speaking to her soul by sweet and strong attractions. Some indication of her response may be gleaned from her notes written at this time. She was evidently thirsting for " more light and more love," and was continually offering herself to God that she might fulfil in all things His holy Will. In this spirit she gave herself up with the docility of a child to the guidance of her confessor, the rector of the Jesuit College at Grand Coteau.

The nuns of the Sacred Heart were extremely kind to her, and even allowed her to share in the retreats given to the community. An extract from the convent journal (1839) mentions that she followed a retreat at Christmas time " to the edification of all, showing great fervour and contentment of spirit."

The bold outlines of the Exercises of St. Ignatius appealed strongly to her mind, as clear as it was bright and generous. She resolved to embrace what the Saint calls the " third degree of humility," that is, the voluntary choice, whenever possible, of suffering, hardship and humiliation in preference to comfort and honour, in

order as closely as possible to resemble Christ in His human life. This resolution she followed so faithfully, according to the testimony of her confessor, that he was obliged to restrict her in her practice of penance.

Her life was already being shaped to some extent, by the inspirations of grace and the direction of her confessor, after the pattern of religious life. There were the daily examinations of conscience, the practice of meditation and penance, regular retreats, and faithful obedience to a spiritual superior. Yet while she was being thus prepared for her special vocation, no thought or suspicion occurred to her of what the future was to bring. In fact, nothing could then have appeared more unlikely than the actual sequence of events. A note giving her feelings with regard to religious life at this time has special interest. She writes: "When I first became aware that the religious state was higher than the secular, I secretly rejoiced that my state in life was fixed and that such a sacrifice would never be asked of me, for had I been a girl and examining my vocation I should always have felt that I must have given all—my very best—to God."

In the joy of her spiritual growth she longed to let the whole world share in the treasure she had found. She began with a little slave girl whom she adopted, converted and mothered. The members of her own family were also won over by her loving devotion. All, with the exception of her eldest brother, followed her example and entered the Catholic Church. Towards her children she was the most devoted and tender of mothers. A letter from a former playmate of theirs gives a glimpse of the home life at Grand Coteau:

"*Lafayette,*
"*April,* 1909.

"DEAR M——,

"Your letter was, as you surmised, a surprise, but let me assure you, a very pleasant one, calling me

to awaken within me the dearest and most cherished memories of my earliest childhood. I was such a little tot—five years old—when I entered [the Convent of Grand Coteau]. I was considered, I suppose, too young to be a regular student, so I was allowed to remain at the cottage where Mr. and Mrs. Connelly dwelt with their children, Adeline, a little girl a year or two older than myself, and her brother, Mercer, a little her senior.

" Of course I boarded and lodged at the Convent, while spending the rest of my time with my dear friends the Connellys. Such times as we had together, you can better imagine than I can describe. They belong to the brightest, sweetest memories of my life.

" Mrs. Connelly gave piano and guitar lessons at the Convent, my eldest sister, now Mrs. Gardner, taking lessons from her. Young as I then was, I can never forget her lovely face, and still lovelier manner. She was a Miss Peacock of Philadelphia, of a most prominent and wealthy family. Her marriage with Mr. Connelly seems to have estranged her from her family, as they left there and sought employment South.

" Mr. Connelly was a highly educated, intelligent man, tall and gaunt, by no means prepossessing to my childish appreciation, and just the very opposite of his beautiful wife . . . whose memory I hold most dear and sacred. . . .

" I remain, as ever, your friend,

" Odéide Mouton."

All was joy and peace in the little home, as in the heart of the young mother who ruled it so happily. But Cornelia aspired to sanctity, and in this world the way to sanctity must always be the Way of the Cross. The spiritual consolations which make the first steps towards God so delightful, are not destined to last. Their object is to attach the soul firmly to its Creator. When this object is attained, God gradually withdraws the sweetness of sensible fervour and leads the faithful soul to

stronger things, that she may learn to seek Him alone in the purity of faith and love. Then follow aridities, desolation, temptations, trials and sufferings, both interior and exterior, which purify the soul and detach it more entirely from earthly things.

We are now approaching this period of trial in Cornelia Connelly's life. As she was destined to do a great work for God and to attain to high sanctity by its fulfilment, her purification came with a searching and terrible intensity. It was preceded by a generous desire to share in the sufferings of Our Lord. She began to long for suffering, and, with the permission of her director, to ask it, of God. This she felt compelled to do, as she afterwards said, by an interior force which urged her on almost in spite of herself. Later, to those of her religious children who showed the same desire, being zealous like herself for the better gifts, she used to say, " when the wish for suffering comes upon you strongly without previous effort on your part, it is from God. Do not resist it."

It has been said that in most cases the crisis of a life comes suddenly. To Cornelia Connelly it came on the morning of January 30th, 1840, when she was out walking with her children. She described it afterwards. It must have been one of those days when the crystal air seems instinct with joyous life. At a little distance stood their pretty cottage nestling among the green shadowy trees, while the sunshine hung golden around. Close at hand her children were running and shouting in the bright, keen air, Merty, just eight years old, Adeline, nearly five, and John, or " Pretty Boy," as they called him, the " delight of her heart," two and a half years old, with fair hair and laughing dark eyes like her own, full of fun and spirit.

She stood still to drink in the joy of it all. A sense of intense love and happiness flooded her soul. Suddenly, impelled by she knew not what, she raised her eyes to

heaven and exclaimed : " O my God, if all this happiness be not for Thy glory and the good of my soul—take it from me. I make the sacrifice ! "

Twenty-four hours later her younger son was laid upon her lap in the agony of death.

He had run into the garden to play with a large Newfoundland dog, near to a sugar-boiler which was used outside the house for converting the raw maple juice into sugar, when the dog suddenly sprang upon him and threw him over into the boiling liquid. For forty-three hours he lingered in unspeakable torture in his mother's arms, until (as she wrote), " at early dawn on the Feast of the Purification he was taken into the Temple of the Lord."

It has been said that in one day we sometimes live long years, and that after a great sorrow the soul may come forth with the experience of a lifetime. We dare not try to look into the deep places of the mother's soul during those long hours, or to venture where none but the Pierced Feet might safely tread. But we know that it was during those terrible forty-three hours that there grew up in her heart that intense devotion to the Mother of Sorrows that marked her after life. For if it was the Babe of Bethlehem and the Child of Nazareth that claimed the dearest love of her heart, when she turned, as she so constantly did, to His Mother, it was generally as the sword-pierced, desolate Mother on Calvary that she envisaged her. Her notes show that, terrible as was the shock of her child's death, it made her cling only the more closely to God, praying for greater faith and for more perfect resignation to His Will.

While she was yielding herself up into the Hands of God to be fashioned as He pleased, her husband, too, was making progress in the spiritual life. Under the guidance of Father de Theux he was now devoting much of his time to prayer. His love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was great, and his faith strong. But

there was an undercurrent of pride, ambition and worldliness, not as yet subdued by grace. He had not realised, as his wife had realised, the necessity for mortification and humility as the basis of the spiritual life. His own brothers were quite alive to the dangerous elements in his character, and had openly warned him of them. But Pierce was now a Catholic and seemed to consider himself safe. Indeed, after his conversion he spent a good deal of time in writing letters of exhortation to his brothers, a habit which his former occupation of preaching may have made second nature to him.

A few extracts from this correspondence may throw some light upon his disposition. After the conversion of his brother John and before his marriage, Pierce sends him some words of advice:

"*May 12th*, 1841.

"By the bye, it may be as well to warn you against the bad example I gave you of buying pretty things, books and pictures, etc. I have long since got over the folly, as it certainly is in anyone but a very wealthy man. . . . I think a Catholic should, as much as possible, buy Catholic books only, and in general he will have enough to do to read such only, and nowadays we have an abundant supply from authors of our own. . . .

"I bless God from the bottom of my heart for all you say about our holy religion. I beg you not to put off for any earthly reason your own Confirmation and First Communion till after your marriage. Have you spoken to your intended about religion? Is she likely, as far as you can at present judge, to follow your example? I trust so with all my heart. It is a bad business when a house is not united within itself, and there is no unity to be depended on in anything where there is not unity in what ought to be nearest to the heart, of all things. But still, let her disposition be ever so good and firm, I do hope you will not put off the reception of the Holy

Sacraments for the sake of doing it together afterwards. Do what you have to do and what you mean to do; do it soberly and do it at once. You will make sure of your course, you will show character, and will be more respected for it by anybody who knows anything about it, as well as by your wife. . . ."

A short time afterwards (July 19th, 1841) he writes again:

"Nothing will contribute more to make Catholics popular and do more good than the establishment of Colleges and Convents. You know how much admiration and gratitude the Sisters of Charity excited among the Protestants in Philadelphia during the cholera.

"Our newspapers and tracts and books, too, it ought to be the business of every Catholic to encourage and disseminate. . . . If every practical Catholic would deny himself to the amount of one-tenth of his income for the sake of works of piety and charity, our Church would double itself in five years from its increased means and its increased respect; for all men involuntarily respect piety when it is accompanied with self-denial. To have no debts in the world, to despise everything like display and luxury (in dress, eating, drinking, trinkets, pretty things, horses, etc.) and at the same time always to have something for every holy and charitable purpose will make any man respected anywhere. . . .

"I beg you not to put off your Confirmation, and to make a solemn rule not to neglect going to confession once a month at least. I know of more than one distinguished layman who have followed the rule of going once a week. I mean in this country; in Europe it is common enough."

These letters show how much in earnest Pierce Connelly was in his religion, while at the same time they reveal a worldly attitude and exaggerated views. The motives

of human respect are so strong in his own mind that he puts them before his brother as the highest incentives to piety.

But, ready as Pierce Connelly was to give good advice to others, a serious perplexity was now beginning to knock at his own door.

Everything in his life makes it clear that he had been gifted with the power of influencing others. Wherever he went he made friends, and great friends. The fascination of the man was felt by everybody. As a clergyman he had worked zealously and successfully for souls. But now there seemed to be no scope for this talent, and he chafed under his enforced inactivity. A secular professor in a Jesuit College would not have had much opportunity for exerting spiritual influence over his pupils, yet it was this for which he longed. He had once thought himself called to be a priest, and had followed the call to the best of his knowledge in the Protestant Church. He felt within himself now a sense of wasted power and of vocation unfulfilled.

The Catholic Church, he knew, demanded celibacy from her clergy If he was indeed still destined for the sacred ministry—and this was the thought which was beginning to press insistently upon him—the sacrifice of separation from his wife would become imperative. What was to be done? Was such a separation right or possible? If so, by what authority could it be sanctioned?

These were the questionings which agitated his mind, and which he had of necessity to hide from Cornelia, who had hitherto shared his every thought. We have her testimony that the union between them had been unclouded. But now she could not fail to detect signs of anxiety, and a certain change in his manner towards her caused by the struggle through which he was passing.

Cornelia never suspected the truth, but she felt that some trouble had come upon him, and for the first time

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she was left in ignorance. The months of silent, anxious watching and of earnest prayer were a preparation for the agony that lay before her. And always through her spiritual notes there runs like an inspiration the thought of coming sorrow and the complete offering of herself to the Will of God.

"O Jesus," she writes, "give me in meditating on Thy Blessed Wounds the sorrow, or some portion at least, that Thy Blessed Mother had.

"O my God, trim Thy vine; cut it to the quick, but in Thy great mercy root it not up yet. My God, help me in my great weakness; help me—help me in trial to serve Thee with new fervour."

At last the blow fell which was to shape anew her life's course. On the Feast of St. Edward, October 13th, 1840, while walking home from Mass with his wife, Pierce Connelly spoke of his desire to become a priest, and explained that the fulfilment of what he believed to be his vocation would necessitate their separation and her entrance into a convent.

It is difficult to realise what must have been her anguish in that hour. She has left no record of the conversation, but later she declared that she would have died of sorrow had it not been for the special assistance of God's grace. Yet, in spite of the confusion into which her mind was thrown, she had answered—clutching at familiar words which must have sounded meaningless then—that, cost what it might, she would submit to God's Will.

As the days passed by, a hundred things must have forced upon her with relentless accuracy all that the sacrifice would entail. The tones of her husband's voice, the very caresses of her children, and above all the sight of the little empty cot which was awaiting the arrival of another child, must have been pain almost past bearing. Her whole being recoiled from the idea of separation. But there was another side. There were those sacred moments in which she had realised God's love—what

He had done for her—the shortness of this life—the length of Eternity. There was her own prayer for suffering—her offering of herself and all she had as a holocaust to God. Suppose He meant to take her at her word? If He really wanted her husband to be a priest—to offer the Infinite Sacrifice—could she stand in the way? For the children even, would it not be a privilege unspeakable?

Gradually her soul grew calmer, and she prayed as One prayed long ago "with a strong cry and tears," and in the strength of His prayer she too was able to say "Thy Will be done."

There is no doubt that such a sacrifice can be, and occasionally has been, inspired by God, for it has the express commendation of Our Lord Himself. "Everyone that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or *wife, or children*, or lands for My Name's sake: shall receive an hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. xix. 29). It requires, of course, a special and clearly marked vocation, and it has only been allowed by the Church in rare cases and after most careful investigation. If there are children provision must be made for them, and before the husband receives Holy Orders the wife must enter a religious Order, or at least make publicly a vow of perpetual chastity.

For the moment Pierce Connelly's directors advised only calm consideration and much prayer that God would make known His Will in this matter. No immediate change in their outward life was proposed. The daily routine at Gracemere went on, and Mrs. Connelly continued her duties calmly, and even cheerfully, so that no one guessed the struggle that was taking place within. By her husband's wish the matter was kept a secret from everyone except their spiritual advisers.

Yet, in spite of her generosity, there were times when the sacrifice seemed too great and her strength almost failed her. In later years Cardinal McCloskey described

one of these moments when she had sought spiritual help from him.

"I can see Mrs. Connelly now, her hands clasped and her eyes uplifted to my face. 'Is it necessary,' she said, 'for Pierce to make this sacrifice, and *sacrifice me?* I love my husband; I love my darling children. Why must I give them up?"'

Amid the strain of conflicting feelings, the weeks and months went by, and in March 1841 her youngest son, Frank, was born. For a time the cares and joys of motherhood must have afforded a welcome occupation and relief.

The following September she made a retreat, in which she seems to have received a clear intimation of God's Will and of her own call to religious life. In the peace that comes through renunciation she writes:

"Examined vocation. Decided. Simplicity—Confidence.

"O my good Jesus, I do give myself all to Thee to suffer and to die on the cross, poor as Thou wert poor, abandoned as Thou wert abandoned."

Then follow a few lines which reveal the dispositions of her soul:

"What can I do but abandon myself to Thee, O my God? I am sure that Thou watchest over all who trust in Thee, and that I shall never fail when I trust all to Thee, and I cast all, all upon Thee; all my anxieties, all my fears, O my God. In te Domine speravi."

Shortly after this retreat Mr. John Connelly brought his young bride, Angelica, to Gracemere. Her visit of four months was a source of many blessings to herself and of pleasant memories to Mrs. Connelly. Upon the sweetness and power which belonged to Cornelia rested the gracious light of her union with God, now made brighter by her sacrifice. She devoted herself to her

guest, who learned to look up to her as her ideal of mother, friend and saint. Mr. John Connelly wrote, many years later:

"Shortly after our marriage in 1841 I took my wife to Grand Coteau, where we remained till Easter, 1842. Thanks be to the good God, my object in taking her there was attained, through the kind and careful instruction, and above all through the sweet and holy example of my sister-in-law. Angelica became a Catholic, lived true and devoted to her religion, and died a most holy death in 1856. . . . It was on this visit that I saw most of my brother's saintly wife and your most blessed Mother Foundress. It was then and there the strong attachment grew up between us which lasted, I hope, till her death."

CHAPTER III

SEPARATION

1842

In this life we learn to value suffering because we find its reward in the possession of that peace which passes all understanding.—*Letter of Mother Connelly.*

The friendship which Mr. Connelly had begun in Rome with the Earl of Shrewsbury was destined to exercise an important influence on his career. Lord Shrewsbury had formed a high opinion of his character and talents, and was distressed to hear of his occupation as an assistant-master in a country school. He wrote urging Mr. Connelly to come to England, where he would certainly find more favourable opportunities of retrieving his fortunes. At the same time he offered to take upon himself the expenses of Mercer's education at Stonyhurst, and invited Mrs. Connelly and the children to Alton Towers whenever they might wish to come.

The serious matter pending, which was to remain a secret for the present, prevented any decided answer. In acknowledging Lord Shrewsbury's kindness, Mr. Connelly expressed a wish to obtain, if possible, some temporary engagement in Europe, and by preference, one that would take him to Rome. It had been suggested to him that he should leave his family for a while as a sort of experimental test of his vocation. He also wished to take his little son to be educated in England. When, therefore, in April 1842, Lord Shrewsbury wrote offering him a post which would exactly meet his wishes, he lost no time in accepting it.

To Mrs. Connelly the final separation appeared to have come at last. But there was no time for indulgence in grief. Prompt measures had to be taken to break up their home, and a school outfit had to be prepared in haste for Mercer. With her own hands she undid all that she had done during four years in Grand Coteau to beautify and make comfortable their little home. Before the end of the month of April all their goods and furniture had been sold by public auction, and the house stood empty.

The real purpose of the journey to Europe was kept a profound secret, and Pierce Connelly wrote to his brother John:

"*April*, 1842.

"I wish, if possible, to take Mercer to England, if I can pay my debts and dispose of Gracemere. I have no idea of going abroad with a debt for Nelie to pay in case of my death, or without making provision in some small way for the children in case of the death of either of us; and then as to the house, to rent it is out of the question; to leave it empty is to leave it to certain ruin, and of course I do not think of leaving Cornelia alone in it. She will board and lodge in the convent with her little ones."

The next letter tells his brother that all their effects have been disposed of and that he leaves Cornelia "fixed delightfully at the Convent of the Sacred Heart." On July 14th, 1842, he writes from Alton Towers:

"You will, no doubt, my dear John, have seen from the papers that we reached the shores of old England safely some ten days ago. The passage was a very long but pleasant one with the exception of icebergs; we saw two awful-looking ones, and were in constant fear for several days and nights. Blessed be God, we were preserved from that most dreadful of dangers."

The letter goes on to describe how Mercer had been left with the Jesuits at Stonyhurst, and expresses a wish that he may become a wise and holy man and serve God as a priest in his own country. Then he continues:

"The only thing to wish is that he [Mercer] could see now and then his blessed little mother, and rest under the influence of her holy example. The happiest hours I have spent since I left home were when I took Nelie's place, and said the rosary and the litany of Our Lady and the rest of our prayers with the little fellow.

"Lord Shrewsbury was good enough to write me an invitation to come as soon as possible to Alton Towers, where I have been happy enough to meet Mr. Spencer, Mr. Lisle Phillipps, Mr. Pugin and others, as well as Dr. Walsh, the holy Bishop of this diocese."

In September 1842 he writes again from Alton to say that he has taken charge, as travelling companion (with £200 a year and all expenses paid), of a young English gentleman:

"Mr. Berkeley of Spetchley, of one of the best families in England, who will come into a large fortune. We shall go to Belgium, Fribourg, Munich, Milan, Ancona, Loreto, Rome, and back by Florence, Genoa and Paris. What a delightful time if Nelie were with me! How much rather would I be at home with her and the little ones than anywhere else without them. . . .

"Dear Grand Coteau! All the magnificence and greatness I am in the midst of is a poor—a very poor—exchange for solitude and holy quiet. . . . Darling Mercer I have not seen for nearly two months. He has had pretty good time to be weaned. On Monday I shall go to see him. . . .

"I hope to be in Munich before the end of October, and in Rome by the end of November. Kiss Angelica

for me. God bless you both and make you as happy as I have been with my own little angel."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ocean his wife, undistracted by change of scene or social life, was bearing alone the brunt of her sacrifice. She was by now installed with her two children in a small cottage within the convent grounds. Thither she went in the spirit of a postulant admitted into religion, for, as we have seen, she had decided her vocation in her last retreat, and she entertained at this time no other prospect than that of remaining as a religious in this convent of the Sacred Heart. A great step in her life had been taken, and she gave herself to God with the generosity which was so beautiful a feature in her character.

We find in her note-book the following prayer, written about this time:

"Open to me, O Jesus, Thy Sacred Heart. Unite me to It for ever, that each breath, each palpitation of my heart, which ceases not even in sleep, may be a witness of my love, and say to Thee without ceasing: 'Yes, Lord, I am all Thine.'"

The separation from her loved ones was terrible to her and it is clear that she suffered intensely. Yet hope and joy were so essential a part of her nature that depression could not overwhelm it.

In October she again joined in the community retreat. She felt that this retreat would call for new and even greater effort, and began it with the words, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Her chief enemies were her thoughts and affections, which would, in spite of herself, follow her husband and her little son across the ocean, or dwell on memories of all that she had given up.

She writes:

"All actions, thoughts, words, are useless that do not tend to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

"Reject all useless thoughts, all thoughts out of place, all thoughts that tend to diminish humility and compunction."

Then she reminds herself, in words which foreshadow the future motto of her Society, that it is *actions* that count, not *sentiments*. The dominant note of the retreat is renunciation. She prays:

"O my God, bless us and fill us with Thy spirit that we may come out of this retreat dead to ourselves and living only for Thee."

It was by dying to herself and living for God that she was able to preserve during this time of trial the beautiful peace of heart which shone upon her countenance, and helped to endear her to the nuns as well as to her little pupils. She seized upon every opportunity of mortifying her own will, but did it with so sweet a grace that it generally passed unnoticed. She afterwards related, to help another to bear the torment of anxiety, an incident which cost her much at the time. It happened one day that her little daughter Adeline developed an infectious disease and was hurriedly isolated by the nuns. Mrs. Connelly, who was teaching in the school, could not be with her. The next morning, knowing that the illness was not serious and that the child had every care, she refrained in a spirit of mortification from making any inquiries about her. Everybody thought that someone else had surely told her how Adeline was, and consequently she went through the whole day without any information. Perhaps only a mother could appreciate the self-denial involved in this.

Her love for her children was very great, and the separation from Mercer was keenly felt. She wrote to him constantly, showing an interest in all the details of

his school life, sending him little presents and encouraging his efforts. A few extracts from her letters to him (mostly undated) will serve to illustrate the way in which she trained her children. Some of her injunctions seem to us counsels of perfection far above the reach of a little boy. But we must remember that Merty had lived from babyhood in a very spiritual atmosphere. At first it is certain that he responded sympathetically to his mother's direction.

"My dear Merty,

"What a very nice letter you sent me to-day. My dear boy, this is just the way I like you to write, and it makes me so happy to know that you can laugh when you want to cry, and so put off getting angry. You will see how much trouble this will keep you out of, and how good-humoured you will grow, and you will soon love everybody and make everybody love you.

"And then it is so very sweet to be always in the presence of God internally and externally; driving away very quickly all naughty or deceitful thoughts before they have taken possession of our mind, or made us waste our time. Besides, if we regret them before we have consented to them, we are saved so much time and trouble in our weekly confession, and can keep ourselves free from sin if we are very vigilant. The devil tempts all of us with bad thoughts, but then all we have to do is to regret them and purify our intention and love God. Love God, and then we can do all we want to do and say all we want to say, for we do not want anything then but just what He wants.

"I am so very glad you did not get angry about the pebbles. You might throw a few back another time as an act of charity, to do the will of another rather than your own, to play with one who wants to play. This is what Our Lord teaches us, and is giving up our own will. Then, after you have played a little while with good

humour, you could call off his attention to something else, and return to your book or whatever you are doing, or good-naturedly ask him to do you some little kindness. You will see how much of God's sweet charity we can gain by such little acts, and how much more humble we become when we are in this disposition.

"Did you ask, my love, for a very little time for your meditation? Only ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, that you may make a little provision for the day, and so watch and pray a little that you may not be led into temptation unprepared to meet it. You will soon see what a good thing it is to make one's resolutions for the day and offer them to God. He will then help us to govern ourselves and to do what we are doing.

"Tell me when you write how you have begun your studies, and if you drive off all useless thoughts.

"I hope you have written to your dear Papa and told him how much you thank him for all the anxiety he had about your passing your vacations pleasantly, and beg him to thank dear Lord Shrewsbury for the pleasant time you had at Alton Towers, and for the pony too. If you have not written, do so at once, before you write again to me.

"I got the pretty little wafers and gave them to Ady, as I only use wax."

. . . . . .

"It pleased me so much, dear Merty, that you should have begged pardon for that little fault, and I think you have quite made up for it, so that you need not waste any thought about it for the future.

"You must write to me at once and let me know where you are in the school, and how you have begun your studies—with all your heart, I hope, bidding good-bye to the castles in the air until next vacation. Your dear Papa tells me that he had a nice letter from you and

that you may learn music and drawing and whatever you have a talent for, as the good Fathers think you may deserve it and would profit by it. How very kind it is of dear Lord Shrewsbury, and you must not forget to pray for him every day.

. . . . . .

"Don't forget your promise to hold up your head, and when you find it moping down, rein it up quickly like a little bird that is going to sing, and say in your heart, 'My God, I love Thee. He who fears Thee, my God, knows no other fear. O my God, help me to know Thee, to love Thee and to serve Thee.'

"You will have been made happy by the wished-for 'yes' [to learn music]. You see how good our good God is when we try to please Him especially.

. . . . . .

"You will soon rise in your class if you mortify your imagination by driving away the castles in the air—the soap bubbles—before study begins. Set your mind on what you have to do. This, you know, is absolutely necessary, or you will never succeed in anything you undertake.

"I feel so happy that you think the Fathers like you, and that you tell me your little faults, and to know that you make some efforts to overcome those little irritabilities you are so subject to. Only remember St. Francis Xavier, how much vanity he had, and yet what a great saint he became. Our passions are of no consequence, you know, provided we only govern them, and do not let them govern us. How very nicely you put them down the other day, in not returning evil for evil. Keep yourself in the Presence of God, and do not let yourself say, do, or think anything that you would not have us or your good masters to know, and so, my dear, dear Merty, you will please men and angels.

"I bless you, my dear boy, as you go to your bed as if I were close by you, and you have only to whisper to

your Guardian Angel to put a little cross on your forehead for me.

"Pray for me, my dear child, for I have many crosses just now for which I must thank God as I ought to do."

The following letter to her brother-in-law gives a pretty glimpse of the two younger children:

"Dear John,

"I received your kind letter a week ago, and you may be sure it gave me much pleasure to know something about you and dear Geckla [Angelica]. And when shall we hope to see you again? You would find Frank quite a big boy, and trying to say something—with pretty curling hair, rosy cheeks and saucy chin—altogether an enviable object. . . .

"I have heard from Pierce once since your letter, though I have had three since he left Alton. He passed a few days with Merty, and tells me he is very well, and Merty strong and rosy, though not fat, notwithstanding a famous appetite. Pierce will travel with young Berkeley until spring, but I suppose he told you himself. His last letter was from Brussels. . . .

"Ady and Frank are both well. I will hope to see you here in Lent. Dear Madame Cutts sends you both many kind messages and all remember you with affection. Frank says 'Unco Dohn' when we talk about you. Ady tells me to say she wants to see you very much, and sends you many kisses.

"As you see I write to you and Geckla together. You must tell me how you passed the summer, dear Angelica, and how you found your father disposed and whether they tormented you about religion, and all that has interested you since you left our sweet solitude.

"Good-bye, my dear John and Geckla.

"Ever yours in the Heart of Jesus,

"C. Connelly."

In spite of the cheerful tone of this letter, Mrs. Connelly was suffering exceedingly. The contrast between her present lonely position and her past happy years as mistress of her own house, with all its joyful interests and duties, was in itself a trial difficult for us to realise. Yet there is not a word of repining in her journal. She writes :

" O God, help me to live, not I but Jesus in me, in His spirit of sacrifice and suffering, with only God in view, the reparation of His glory and the salvation of souls. For this end even suffering becomes sweet."

CHAPTER IV

SUSPENSE

1843–1844

Yea, meditate on this: that the soul can never receive nor desire virtue, unless it have cravings, vexations and temptations to endure with true and holy patience for the love of Christ crucified.—*Letter of St. Catherine of Siena.*

While Cornelia Connelly was thus passing in retirement the months of waiting, her husband was enjoying the excitement and distractions of his European tour, and as tutor to young Mr. Berkeley was frequenting the most fashionable society.

"The access which I was able to give my young friend to high society," he wrote complacently to his brother, "was the principal reason perhaps why he was put under my charge."

At last, after many delays, he reached Rome and laid his petition for separation before the ecclesiastical authorities. Their reply was that nothing could be done in the matter unless husband and wife came together to Rome to signify their mutual consent. Mrs. Connelly was accordingly summoned, and at once made preparations to leave the convent with her children. It must have been a relief to her to feel that something definite was now to be done. Her last act was to steal silently to the grave where her two youngest children lay buried. It was hard to tear herself away from that loved spot, yet not for those innocents, now safe with God, were her bitterest tears to fall.

She left Grand Coteau on July 8th, 1843, having spent

fourteen months in the convent. Her husband, with Mr. Berkeley, crossed over to fetch her. They met in Philadelphia, where Mrs. Connelly found to her surprise that there were to be many delays. Instead of proceeding directly to Rome, as she had expected, they were to spend a month in Philadelphia, another month in England and some weeks in France, as Mr. Connelly had not yet concluded his tutorial engagement. They sailed in August, and in September were guests at Alton Towers. This was an especially trying time to Mrs. Connelly, for Pierce, always proud of his lovely wife, took her into society as much as possible. He accepted the invitations which seem to have been showered upon them, and wrote at the same time to his brothers of how little their "dear, blessed sister was deceived by the vanities of the world, and how little she cared for adulation and flattery." It was natural, under the circumstances, that she should not care for them. She had looked upon herself as having already begun her religious life. It was postponed, but only for a short time. In the interval she made definite profit for her soul, and obeyed her husband from supernatural motives as she had previously obeyed her religious Superior.

She was at this time, as always, a great favourite, and the extraordinary charm of her manner and bearing was spoken of long afterwards by some who met her at Alton. Though she was essentially unworldly, she always enjoyed interesting conversation, and she had a special talent for putting interest and vitality into all conversation in which she took part. Her bright gaiety was so unselfish that it had not been dimmed by her own sorrow.

Even the servants were struck by her kindness and consideration for others, and noticed how she spared them trouble on every occasion and thanked them sweetly for little services. We catch a glimpse of her at that time from the recollections of a housemaid at Alton Towers. She used to tell of the affection and admiration

shown by Mr. Connelly for his wife, and of her beauty and gentle ways. Later this housemaid was one of the first to ask to join her Society as a lay sister. She became Sister Austin and was throughout her long life devoted to her Superior, whom she survived by twenty-five years, dying at Mayfield in 1904.

After about a month spent at Alton Towers the Connellys left for France and Rome.

The following extracts from Pierce Connelly's letters to his brother give an account of the journey and of subsequent events:

"September 29th we sailed from Brighton to Dieppe, then we passed a month in Paris, where we found some old friends of Nelie's and mine that showed her every kind of attention, especially Madame de Goutand, a sister of Cardinal Rohan. Half a dozen dinner parties with her and the Duchesse de D. and the Princesse de B., besides the famous author and convert, Mr. Kenelm Digby, and one or two other English friends."

From Paris the travellers went by diligence to Orleans and from Orleans to Lyons; then down the Rhône to Avignon, where Mrs. Connelly was left with the children whilst her husband and Mr. Berkeley visited Nîsmes and Pont du Gard. Reaching Marseilles they went by sea to Cività Vecchia, breaking the voyage at Genoa and Leghorn; remaining at Genoa long enough to visit the Leaning Tower at Pisa and other places of interest.

It was not until December 7th that they reached the end of their journey. Six years had elapsed since the happy time Mr. and Mrs. Connelly had spent in Rome after their conversion, and the pain of the contrast with those days must have been keen.

Pierce Connelly writes in his usual strain:

"The Borgheses were almost the first persons we saw on reaching Rome. We were invited to dine there

the very day we arrived, being not a little magnified in the eyes of the people by the grand carriage and servants the Prince sent for us.

"Little Ady was invited too, and you may imagine she enjoyed herself with the little Princess Agnes, Lord Shrewsbury's granddaughter, who is only a year younger than herself. She dined and drove with her two or three times before she went to the convent (the Trinità dei Monti), where she was installed on December 17th.

"She and Frank as well as dear Nelie are all well, thank God, and looking all the better for their journeyings. Indeed you would not know Frank, I am quite sure; he is totally changed in his appearance, a stout, red-cheeked, red-legged, English-looking little boy, as good a child as ever lived, and as full of fun. I took him with us when we went to see the Pope, and he made our audience a very merry one indeed. As we were coming away I told him to kneel down and kiss the Pope's foot like Ady, so he jumped forthwith upon Ady's back to kiss it over her shoulder, and finished by giving the foot a crack with his handkerchief."

The Connellys took apartments in the Via Ripetta. It was not long before Cornelia found her way to the Convent of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità dei Monti, where she joined the Sodality of the Children of Mary.

As the weeks passed by no reply to their petition for separation came from the Roman authorities, and Mr. Connelly, expecting long delays, began to plan out the next few years for them both. He wrote to his brother John:

"At Easter Berkeley and I will go to Naples and Sicily, leaving Nelie with the Borgheses, and I will come back from Sicily to Rome for a little while on our way to Germany. Thus Cornelia will have a better chance of seeing how she will like being with the Borghese family. From Germany Berkeley and I go to England. It is, I believe, settled that I shall at once take charge of young

Talbot, the future Earl of Shrewsbury, as soon as I have done with Berkeley, which will probably be in July or August. Young Talbot will still keep the tutor he now has, but I shall have the general superintendence of him and his studies. Dear Lord and Lady Shrewsbury truly show us in everything the greatest confidence and affection. Our plans, however, are not certain, as you see. Both of us will probably spend one or two more winters in Rome, but it is not, of course, so certain where Nelie will spend her summers. She may accept the Borghese invitation, and pass this summer at Frascati with them. I suppose it is time enough to think of the next a year hence. All will be arranged for the best in the end, I have no doubt. Every day of my life I see more clearly how true it is that nothing is too small or contemptible for the wonderful Providence of God, and that not a hair of our head but is counted."

To Mrs. Connelly the suspense must have been more trying than any certainty. It is difficult to make a sacrifice which cuts at the very roots of one's life. It is far more difficult to make that sacrifice, and believe it to be accepted, and then to be plunged back into uncertainty and to live thus for months. It looked as if the Pope might decline to grant their petition, but even putting this supposition aside, there had been moments in the past year when Cornelia had almost wondered if the whole dislocation of their lives had been for nothing. Her husband was deeply and fervently religious, but his delight in society, his anxiety to be among notable people, and even his continual expressions of devotion towards herself disquieted her. He did not, at all times, fulfil her idea of one who was on the verge of forsaking worldly honours and domestic joys for a more sacred and solemn dignity.

She had spoken to him on the subject more than once, warning him of the difficulties of the state to which he aspired and offering to return to their former life before

the matter should become public or any important step be taken. He had listened to her and assured her of his determination to persevere. Together and separately they had consulted wise and holy directors. All were of opinion that God did indeed call them to make this supreme sacrifice.

Mrs. Connelly could not see into the future, but she realised that anxiety and fretting would defeat God's purpose, and that her whole task now was to keep her soul in peace till He should make known His will.

With this purpose she joined a retreat for ladies, at the Trinità in March 1844. The meditations on the eternal truths brought her great light and peace, and strengthened her resolve to " mortify nature one day at a time, do and suffer one day at a time."

She writes :

" If, O my God, Thou art pleased to place me in religious life, I offer myself to Thee to suffer in my heart with Thee and for Thee, not to do my will, but Thine in the will of my Superiors.

" I offer myself to Thee to suffer in my body by all my senses, by cold, by hunger, by thirst, and in any manner whatsoever (and without reserves) that may the most contribute to Thy glory and the good of my soul."

The following is an extract translated from a manuscript preserved in the archives of the Convent of the Sacred Heart :

" In the month of March, 1844, the Exercises of St. Ignatius were given in the convent by Rev. Fr. Zuliani, S.J., to ladies of the world.

" This gathering of ladies who followed the retreat was remarkable, not only for the diversity of their rank, but also for the generous fidelity of all in entering into the spirit of the exercises, and in going through them in a most fruitful manner. Silence and recollection were

strictly observed. These ladies voluntarily submitted themselves to a religious dependence, as well as to the practice of humility and mortification without the human respect which might easily have checked their zeal.

"Among them a young American lady was remarkable, the wife of a distinguished Protestant minister. They had both become converts and had encouraged each other to undertake the most perfect life for the love of God. This great desire had brought them both to Rome, and Madame Connelly made the retreat in order to draw down the necessary graces for its accomplishment. The other ladies were deeply edified to behold her waiting upon them at table with a humility and simplicity which could only proceed from a faithful response to grace."

The Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, had taken an interest in the Connellys from their first presentation to him in 1836. This interest was probably increased by the esteem in which they were held by the venerable Bishop Flaget of Bardstown, who happened to be staying in Rome in the winter of 1843–4. He was a man of acknowledged wisdom and sanctity, known to possess the gift of miracles. In connection with his approval of the aspirations of the husband and wife some supernatural occurrences are spoken of, but no details have come down to us. It may have been due to the intervention of the Bishop and of other influential friends that the Pope put an end to further delays in the case before him, in March 1844.

Pierce Connelly wrote to his brother:

"*Rome,*
"*St. Patrick's Day,* 1844.

"My dear John,

"It seems only right that you and dear Geckla should know before anybody else what will not now be long unknown to everybody.

" Long before the holy Bishop Flaget spoke to you of his desire that Nelie and I should give ourselves wholly to God, we had already taken our resolution. The thing had been thought of two years perhaps before you brought Angelica to Grand Coteau, and we had then been living as brother and sister since the autumn of 1840, six months before the birth of little Frank.

" My journey to England, as you may suppose, was really with a view to this same thing, and when I took leave of dear Nelie on Ascension Day in 1842 we did not know that we should ever see one another again until we both had on our long gowns. It was thought necessary that we should be tried by a separation of that kind. Moreover arrangements were to be made about the children, but things could not be settled then, and as I always wished Cornelia and the children to be on the same side of the Ocean, I was glad to come with young Berkeley to bring her. Still there seemed little chance of matters being brought to a speedy conclusion, and I had agreed to pass some years with Lord Shrewsbury, and Nelie with the Borghese family, but now within the last month the Father General and the Pope himself have approved of the thing and everything is determined.

" His Holiness sent for the Cardinal Vicar the day before yesterday, and told him he dispensed with all letters dimissory from America, and that His Eminence might give me Minor Orders immediately. This will perhaps be done before the end of Lent, and Nelie at the same time will enter the Convent of the Sacred Heart where little Ady is, not as a novice but only as a postulant, remaining at liberty as long as Frank has need of her. He is to be received with his nurse in a cottage in the garden of the Convent just as he was at Grand Coteau. Cornelia will always pass her nights with him, and he has the most beautiful garden you can imagine to play in, large and high, with a sweet view of all Rome.

" You know the Prince Borghese has taken charge of

Frank's education, and he will be put either here in the College of Nobles at Rome, or with Merty at Stonyhurst in England, as soon as he is old enough. So far, you see, things have been ordered very wonderfully. Our secret was never discovered, hardly even guessed perhaps, not even by Mary Peacock, and there was no opposition or hint of that sort. Then the little money that we earned at Grand Coteau is safely placed in the hands of the Fathers there, and will be something for the children, except so much as will be wanted to make up my debt to Dr. Mercer after George has sold the common bank-stock. The children are at once placed as well as little princes could desire, with the best of educations secured to them, with the interest and protection of great and holy people. Cornelia is where the two little ones are and in the midst of the most admirable community, and as soon as I am in Priest's Orders, and hear that Dr. Mercer's debt is paid, I shall enter the holy Society of Jesus. Tell Angelica Nelie has the sweetest little person in the world to take care of Frank, well brought up, never at service before, indeed more of a governess than a nurse, a convert, an orphan, turned out of her home for her faith, when Lady Shrewsbury's sister heard of her for us.

"Remember, dear John, all these things are secrets until they are known from others here.

"It is a little uncertain if I shall finish my studies and go into my noviceship here or in England, and the day of my taking the Minor Orders is not yet named. Indeed it is all not a little uncertain, for who can tell how long he will be faithful? and nothing but God's great grace will save one's courage from failing even at the last moment."

Events now moved quickly. In Holy Week Pierce Connelly put on the ecclesiastical dress and received the tonsure. The deed of separation which had been legally executed and signed on April 1st, 1844, then became

publicly known. On Easter Tuesday, April 9th, Mr. Connelly took Cornelia to the Trinità. The convent journal for that date gives the following entry :

(*Translation*).

" To-day, Easter Tuesday, we have had the joy of receiving Mrs. Connelly as a postulant. As soon as she came among us she showed by her simplicity and religious spirit, which she seems already to possess, that she surpassed the opinion which we had already formed of her."

On May 1st, Mr. Connelly received Minor Orders in the convent church, the event being thus recorded in the journal :

(*Translation*).

" *May 1st*, 1844.

" This opening day of the month of our Queen and our Mother was marked by a ceremony doubly touching in its twofold significance. Mr. Connelly received Minor Orders in our Church from the hands of the Cardinal Vicar (Cardinal Constantine Patrizi). The imposing solemnity of the ceremonial was enhanced by the faith and calm recollection visible in the countenance and bearing of the recipient. Mrs. Connelly was singing in the choir while their mutual sacrifice was being accomplished. Their little daughter Adeline, with a faith quickened by the thought of having a priest for her father, was divided between the joy she experienced on that account and a sadness which made her tears flow."

Towards the close of the year Mr. Connelly wrote to his brother George from Tivoli :

" *October 6th*, 1844.

" I truly bless God, and God will bless you for the wise and Christian way in which you judge of what we

have done, as well of the great merit of your dear blessed sister-in-law; and though you, as well as dear John, seem disposed to judge rather harshly of the worldly tone of part of the letters I sent you, still I am not sorry at least to know what you think in this as in all respects. I wrote what I did because I thought it would interest you and not, I hope, because my heart was more in such trifles than in religion. And then, too, it was natural that I should tell you whatever promised to be of advantage to our dear little ones.

" Besides, after all, in the enjoyments and associations you speak of there is nothing inconsistent with great holiness in the opinion of Catholics. Our Saviour Himself provided the good wine at the merry marriage feast; and poor as was His most blessed Mother, He took care that she should be of royal blood. . . ."

" I saw dear Nelie and the children about a fortnight ago when I was in Rome. They were all well. I shall send your letter to her. You would be surprised to see little Ady—a sweet child. I have just received a letter from her with her bulletin for the year from the Superior. She writes remarkably well for her age. . . .

" Merty too writes me long crossed letters, as well as to his dear mother. He has been distinguished also, and is a good cricket player, a letter I got yesterday from England says. Merty writes that he has been removed to the College, that is to join the big boys. But I think it must be temporary, for the holidays, but we shall soon see. He writes to each of us once a month, and we send the letters to one another. . . .

" You all shall have a share in my Masses when it shall please God for me to offer the Holy Sacrifice."

CHAPTER V

AT THE TRINITÀ DEI MONTI

1844–1845

Woe is me, Lord, but this is a dreary pastime! My whole nature rebels against these words. Lord, how shall I ever endure it all? Gentle Lord, one thing I must say. Couldst Thou not have found out some other way, in Thy eternal wisdom, to save me and show Thy love for me, some way which would have exempted Thee from Thy great sufferings, and me from their bitter participation? —Blessed Henry Suso: *Eternal Wisdom.*

Mrs. Connelly had naturally been reassured as to her husband's dispositions by the events of the last few weeks. Both he and she had now definitely entered upon their new life, and all obstacles were apparently at an end. The children were well provided for, and, in fact, the change in the circumstances of their parents would not so greatly affect their early years. Mercer would have been at school in any case. He would now spend his holidays with his father, visiting his mother from time to time. Adeline would stay with her mother in the convent and complete her education there. Little Frank would also remain with her until the time came for him to go to school.

Mrs. Connelly's whole desire now was to give herself completely to God in the state to which He had called her. She wrote:

"It is for the glory of God that we should be saints. God wills what is for His glory; therefore God wills us to be saints. God wills me to be a saint.

"I will to be a saint.

"*Therefore I shall be a saint.*"

But now a new kind of trial was to invade the quietness of her solitude. The spiritual consolations which had previously lightened her sacrifice left her, and her soul became a prey to desolation and fear. The fatigue and suspense of the last few months had told upon her health, and the bright buoyancy of her nature failed her for once. She afterwards spoke of the feeling of dread that came as the convent gates closed upon her, as she thought, for life, and said that she felt the loneliness and the seclusion, and the enclosure weighing like a burden on her spirit.

She found her bed very hard and her room very cold, but, as she afterwards related to encourage a novice, she silently welcomed these little hardships as her first sacrifices in religion, and offered to bear them all her life. In examining her dispositions before the approaching Feast of Pentecost, she blames herself for " misplaced gravity," and resolves " to give to the Holy Ghost many smiles, and to offer each smile as an invocation, as a fidelity, and as a co-operation with grace."

By the nuns she was received with a frank and sisterly affection which won her gratitude. They had now been acquainted with her for some months, and they recognised her soundness of judgment as well as her growing sanctity. Although she was partly taken up with the care of her little son Frank, she was allowed to follow all the community exercises and was carefully instructed in the practices of religious life.

In November 1844 a retreat was given to the community at the Trinità. On Cornelia's soul it brought down an avalanche of repugnance and desolation. After the desperate struggle with her strong affections, and the long suspense of uncertainty, she had expected to find a haven of peace in religion, and now even in this she seemed doomed to disappointment. Her weakened health gave way under the strain of the retreat. Upon the past she dared not look and the future was dark. Death seemed the only possible solution to her troubles, and she longed for it

as for a merciful release. She even thought it was at hand, and decided to "make this retreat in preparation for death." She wrote:

"Incapable of listening or understanding or thinking: I offered that which the others understood, and forced my will to rejoice in the greatness of God and in my own abjection and misery. My soul sleeps. At the Mass I sang half asleep."

Unable to feel or to think as she would have wished, she takes refuge in the last stronghold of the soul, her will, and fights on bravely.

"God has created all things for us and us for Himself. I belong all to God. There is nothing in the world that I would not leave to do His Holy Will and to satisfy Him.

"My God, help me to know Thy Will and give me the grace and strength to accomplish it.

"I had some stray thoughts about the children. I am so happy the good Father de Villefort thinks Frank ought to stay with me till he is eight years old. I think so too, but I am so much afraid of having any reserves with God."

She could find no comfort and she prayed:

"I abandon myself to Thee, O my God, and beg of Thee to preserve me from all illusion and to keep me in the holy justice of humility."

So she passed through the retreat in a kind of agony, tossed up and down by the waves of sorrow, her soul clinging to God in the darkness.

The perplexity that weighed upon her most heavily at the moment was her disinclination to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart. In spite of her gratitude and affection towards the nuns, an interior impulse drew her away and made her feel that God's Will for her was not there. This was the more distressing as the time for Pierce Connelly's

ordination was approaching. On June 18th, 1845, Father Rosaven, S.J., was deputed by the Cardinal Vicar of Rome to receive Cornelia's solemn vow of chastity, which was a necessary preliminary to her husband's ordination, and which she made publicly in the following terms :

(*Translated from the French.*)

" Almighty and Eternal God, I, Cornelia, the lawful wife of Peter Connelly, trusting in Thine infinite goodness and mercy, and animated with the desire of serving Thee more perfectly, with the consent of my husband who intends shortly to take Holy Orders, do make to Thy Divine Majesty a vow of perpetual chastity at the hands of the Reverend Father Jean Louis Rosaven, of the Society of Jesus, delegated for this purpose by His Eminence the Cardinal Vicar of His Holiness for the city of Rome, supplicating Thy Divine Goodness by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, to be pleased to accept this offering of Thy unworthy creature, as a sweet-smelling savour, and that as Thou hast given me the desire and the power to make this offering to Thee, so Thou wouldst grant me abundant grace to fulfil the same."

On the following Sunday, June 22nd, Pierce Connelly received the Order of Subdeacon in the convent chapel; on June 29th the Order of Deacon; and on July 6th he was ordained Priest.

In the early morning of July 7th, 1845, in the chapel of the Trinità he celebrated his first Mass. While he stood at the altar to offer the sublime sacrifice Cornelia was singing in the choir the solemn words " Tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech." As the Holy Sacrifice proceeded the mother led her little daughter Adeline to the altar-rails to receive for the first time the Bread of Angels from the hands of her father. Cornelia herself set the last spiritual seal upon the deed which separated her from her earthly love by accepting from his

hands the Heavenly Spouse to whom both had now sworn eternal fidelity.

Shortly afterwards the newly-ordained priest wrote to America:

"Deus meus et omnia! How graciously, how sweetly He dealt with us! How gently, how beautifully He ordered all! I wanted to write to you when I first put on the cassock, but I felt afraid to write about it. It seemed too great to count upon, and, till the blessed day I said my first Mass, I never could feel sure of it. And then to have my little angel of a wife, with her daughter at her side, kneeling before the same Altar, when I had not known if we should ever meet again at the time I saw you!"

In spite of the consolation which these events brought to Cornelia, the months which followed the ordination were exceedingly trying for her. She knew that she was not destined to remain in the Society of the Sacred Heart, yet she was not acquainted with the nuns of any other Order. She explained her position to the Superiors, who generously allowed her to stay with them until her plans should be settled. Then, as before, she waited for God.

Of her interior life we again catch passing glimpses in her notes. They tell of struggle and of weariness, of fervent desires, of spiritual attractions and repulsions. We find her longing for the seclusion of Carmel, and questioning whether her life's work may not be that of quiet prayer and penance for the salvation of others. She read a great deal and wrote out long extracts from spiritual treatises.

But this time of uncertainty was not to last long. Ever since Dr. Wiseman's visit to England in 1835 he had taken up seriously the idea of the conversion of that country to the Faith of its fathers, and like all true reformers he had seen that education must be his most powerful weapon. The boys were not wholly unprovided for, but there was very little possibility of a Catholic education

for their sisters. The Earl of Shrewsbury was also interested in the question. Both had known Cornelia Connelly since her first visit to Rome in 1836, and to both she now seemed to offer a solution of the problem.

The Holy Father had heard Wiseman's account of the Catholic movement in England, and his interest had been increased by the visits of many prominent Englishmen to Rome during the last few years. He now lent a willing ear to the representations of Dr. Wiseman and Lord Shrewsbury.

Accordingly, towards the end of the year 1845, Cornelia Connelly's uncertainty was brought suddenly to an end. In a memorable interview, Pope Gregory XVI declared to her that she was not called to join any existing Order, but that she had a great work to do in God's Church. This work was to be the education of Catholic girls in England.

It does not appear that the Holy Father at first intimated to Cornelia that she was to be the actual foundress of the new Order. The details were left vague for the moment, and she was instructed to draw up Rules and Constitutions suitable for such a foundation, with the assistance of Father Grassi, S.J. She had the advice also of Father Rosaven, S.J., now her ordinary confessor.

As her own footsteps in the spiritual life had been guided by Jesuit Fathers, so from the first the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus were the inspiration and the main source of those of the new Society.

She longed to have the Holy Name of Jesus in some way impressed as a seal upon her work. And God, ordering all things sweetly, deigned to satisfy this loving desire of her heart. One day as she was in prayer, recommending the future Congregation to God, she heard the words "Society of the Holy Child Jesus." From that moment she thought of it, spoke of it, and prayed for it under that title. She also related afterwards that she used to work at the Rule before a small picture of the Holy Child in His Mother's arms, and that on one occasion the Sacred

Infant smiled upon her supernaturally whilst she was engaged on her task.

The end of the Society was to be the individual sanctification and perfection of its members, as well as the extension of the Kingdom of Christ in the souls of others, especially of children, through education and spiritual works of mercy.

As regards the cradle of the Society, Cornelia's heart turned instinctively to America, but Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect of Propaganda, strongly supported the wishes of Bishop Wiseman and Lord Shrewsbury for a foundation in England. All opposition from Cornelia ceased upon the Holy Father saying to her " From England let your efforts in the work of Catholic education reach America." Thus the work of the Society was marked out and blessed by the Vicar of Christ from its beginning.

It was to be undertaken, not only in obedience, but also in real poverty. For, now that her children were provided for, very little of her own income remained. In after years Mrs. Connelly would recall this fact with satisfaction as having stamped the Society from the first with the likeness to Bethlehem.

It was arranged that she should leave Rome on April 18th, 1846. Her immediate destination was the Convent of the Assumption in Paris, where she was to wait with her two children and their maid until Bishop Wiseman should have found a convenient opportunity for her to begin her work.

Pierce Connelly wrote (April 28th) to his brother John :

" Nelie and the little ones left here for France about ten days ago. It was too much for her to spend a third summer in Rome ; and as she does not intend to enter the Sacred Heart, she will remain for some time in a convent of another Order, most probably of the Visitation. You know she can hardly become a regular nun until Frank is seven, so she has not taken any habit but

remained free, though living in a convent. Her heart, however, is as much in religion as if she were already professed, and her life quite that of a nun. . . .

" Poor little Ady went away very heart-broken. but Frank was rejoiced at the idea of travelling, and seeing Merty as he hoped, and Nelie was, as she always is, the comforter of everybody.

" I am hoping for some good news of dear Geckla. Truly God has blessed you in that sweet little wife. I shall go on, you may be sure, praying for you in the Holy Mass. You know all that is going on in the way of conversions in England, of course. Blessed be God ! . . .

" You will think I am learning to be poor when I tell you that the hat I now wear is the only one I have worn, winter and summer, for more than two years, and my blessed Angel of a wife and her little ones travel in the second or servants' places in the steamer."

Pierce Connelly had by this time decided not to enter the Society of Jesus but to remain a secular priest. His decision was probably due in some measure to the persuasion of Lord Shrewsbury, who wished to have him as chaplain at Alton Towers.

Probably the Jesuit Fathers, always famous for their " discernment of spirits," were not entirely inconsolable at this defection of a rather alarming postulant. Neither did the Roman authorities make any objection to the change of plan, and Mr. Connelly left Rome with Lord Shrewsbury in May.

A letter written by Mrs. Connelly to her brother-in-law in July 1846 shows her feelings at this time.

" I have this moment got a letter from Pierce. He is well, and deeply engaged in the duties of the ministry, instructing, preaching, hearing confessions, etc. etc. So you see it is not for nothing that I have given him to God. You may be sure this thought gives me much consolation, and we ought to look for a greater share of the divine love

in proportion as we are willing to sacrifice our natural happiness A.M.D.G., and look, too, for even more in eternity.

" I have said nothing about our dear little god-child. I wish I could see it and help Angelica to take care of it, but she must make the cross on its forehead for me every morning, and as I am so far away from it and all of you, I can only pray, and I do always, more than once a day, that Almighty God may keep all of you, and bless you and fit you for the eternal beatitude. I thank you most sincerely for your remembrance before the altar, and beg of you not to forget us and our intentions after your Communions, and sometimes to receive our Lord for our intentions. When we remember that one Communion would be sufficient to make saints of us if we corresponded perfectly with the grace of God, it makes us hope that that one will finally come, and will deliver us from a divided heart. For why are we not all saints? Only because our hearts are not fixed in God."

CHAPTER VI

BEGINNINGS

1846–1847

From the living wells of His perfect humility, His divine charity and His absolute obedience we are to receive the spirit of the Holy Child Jesus.—*Rule S.H.C.J.*

In August 1846 Bishop Wiseman wrote to Mrs. Connelly desiring her to come to England and make a beginning of the new Society in the Midland District, where there was a wide field for apostolic work. It was now that she finally understood from him that she herself was to be the Foundress. In vain she protested her unfitness and inexperience and begged at least to be allowed first to pass through some novitiate before being entrusted with the religious training of others. She was obliged to give way before the authority of her ecclesiastical superior. The working of God's Providence in this matter was apparent to others, though not to the humble Foundress herself. The Holy Spirit alone was to be her Novice-Master, and the sacred influence to which she had faithfully yielded herself during the past ten years was to continue working through her for the sanctification of others.

Meanwhile, her position was not an easy one, and it demands an effort of imagination to realise the situation from her point of view. She was a stranger, almost friendless, without money or influence, and without a single companion. She had the care of two young children, and she was likely to be hampered in her career by a history which would certainly arouse prejudice in

a country noted as much for its Protestantism as for its devotion to family ties.

She, however, obeyed the Bishop's summons immediately. He had made arrangements for her to be received with her children in a convent of Sisters of Mercy, at St. Joseph's House, Birmingham, where they arrived on August 18th, and where they were at once joined by Merty.

The presence of her children was a great comfort to Mrs. Connelly, but it was not long before she was called upon to sacrifice even their companionship. Mr. Connelly, who was showing a certain restlessness in his new position, suddenly made up his mind that they were to go to school, and wrote his orders to that effect. He does not seem to have given any adequate reason for this step. Perhaps he felt that he would in this way be able to see them more frequently than if they remained with their mother. It was arranged that Adeline should go to the Convent of the Holy Sepulchre, New Hall, Chelmsford, and Frank to a school, kept by a Mrs. Nicholson, for little boys at Hampstead.

Mrs. Connelly had already been joined in Birmingham by her first companion. Sister Aloysia, as she was afterwards called, was the first lay-sister admitted into the new Society. She was filled with admiration of Mrs. Connelly, as she watched her, under the cross of the impending separation from her children, and wrote down her recollections of those days:

"Never shall I forget the struggle of that separation. It was, I think, one of the greatest sacrifices she had to make. Still there was never seen a cloud of sadness; the generosity of her heart was marked on her countenance so that it was noticed by all around. It was at this time I first knew her, and watched her as I would a Saint. She was so patient, so gentle, that I, as a secular, wondered how she could be so very calm and peaceful

under so many annoying and trying circumstances. Peace seemed to be a virtue she possessed and valued very much."

Once again the clash of natural and spiritual claims had become acute for the mother, and once again she silently conquered. To Merty, now back at Stonyhurst, she wrote simply and even gaily on the subject. He had spent the latter part of his summer vacation with her, and they had renewed the happy intimacy of his early childhood. He confided to his mother his thoughts and plans for the future. His last letter had evidently unfolded the project of becoming a famous general and leading his men to battle, while at the same time, by an ingenious combination of devotion and utility he would ensure the safety of the whole party by providing them with scapulars to wear. For Merty discretion was, without a doubt, the better part of valour. He ought to have been thinking about his studies, but in her laughter over the childish scheme, his mother forgets to scold him for this lapse. Like a true schoolboy, too, he was beginning to feel anxious about his Christmas hamper, and she takes care to reassure him:

"My dear Merty,

"I am very glad you have found time at last to write, for I began to think you must certainly be building your airy castles since I had been so long without any demonstration of your reality.

"I think I told you something about the nice school at Hampstead where I had put our darling little Frank. Such nice little boys of his own age, and some still younger, and he is so happy. Mrs. Nicholson says he has only cried once since I left him. It was dear Father Brownbill (the brother of the saint) who recommended the school to me.

"And dear little Ady is so happy too, so very happy.

You know I told you our good God would be sure to arrange all these things without our thinking so deeply and mistrustfully.

"You have written me such a nice letter and said so much that pleased me, but you have not said anything about your faults that you promised to mention to me, you know. Can it be possible that you have not been in a passion since you last wrote? How delightful that would be! Be sure and tell me when you write again if this is so. . . .

"I think I must make a little note of the words you spell wrongly, so that you may correct yourself a little more than you do, for you have been spelling the same words wrongly for the last year, such as:

Ofended for offended.
writte ,, write.
enought ,, enough.
remaine ,, remain.

"Now you make me laugh about the regiment, but you know in order to know how to command you must learn how to obey first. And then you propose the scapular and Paters and Aves, as life preservers, I suppose. But then to be generous they should at the same time be ready to throw away their lives for a good cause.

"You may be quite sure of getting a Christmas-box if I can find a way to send it, which I shall inquire about. I thought you were allowed ten shillings pocket money. Would you want ten shillings more, do you mean? And would it be necessary for you to make merry to your heart's content?

"God bless you, my dear boy, and help you to put away flash and vanity with courage and generosity. I press you to my heart and put the little cross on your forehead.

"Ever your affectionate and devoted mother in Christ,
"C. CONNELLY."

During her stay in Birmingham Mother Connelly was introduced to the Rev. John Henry Newman, then residing at Maryvale. Father Newman took a lively interest in the new Society, appreciating at once the aims and spirit of the Foundress. It was probably through his influence that a friend of his, Miss Bowles, joined Mother Connelly. She was a recent convert, and most capable and accomplished. By this time another postulant had arrived, a young girl named Veronica, who offered herself as a lay-sister. In October came the final summons from Bishop Wiseman. The Society was to be begun in a large and beautiful convent which had been built at Derby, and contained accommodation for a community and schools. The Feast of St. Edward was chosen as the day of departure.

The four companions communicated together on the morning of Wednesday, October 13th, at the Convent of Mercy, and then left for Derby, where they arrived about noon. When Mother Connelly first beheld the splendid building in which the little community was to live, it was with feelings of dismay. "We shall never stay here," she exclaimed; "this is not Bethlehem!" The others must have shared her feelings as they explored the echoing rooms, whose size only served to emphasise their own insignificance. Mother Connelly also foresaw material difficulties in the care of so large a building. But there was no alternative, so she made the best of it.

Sister Aloysia, describing their arrival, says:

"The convent was quite empty except the parlour, and there were some bedsteads with beds and pillows in the dormitory. There was a leg of mutton in the kitchen, and some potatoes and carrots on the fire, but no knives or forks or plates, or anything else in the place. The priest's sister, who was also his housekeeper, lent us a few things, so that we soon got some dinner.

"The first thing after dinner was to begin and arrange

a room for the chapel, as the proper chapel was not yet finished. The priest thought we could have Holy Mass the next morning, but it was impossible to get an altar till next day, the 14th, so that we had Mass on the 15th, which was the Feast of St. Teresa.

" Then began the airing of rooms, making the beds, and attending to tradespeople who had been recommended to call for orders; while there was no one to attend to everything but Reverend Mother, for Miss Bowles was sick from the journey. Veronica was set to lighting fires all over the convent. Reverend Mother's great anxiety was to have every place dry and well aired. I was put into the kitchen to be cook, refectorian, portress to the back door, night-visitor, caller and bell-ringer. For though the convent was empty we began order and regularity as if the house were full."

Mother Connelly's first care was to provide a temporary resting place for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. This, with the willing assistance of the two priests and their housekeeper, was soon done, and if the arrangements made to receive the King of kings were poor in outward show, they were at least rich in love. The altar, tabernacle, ciborium and candlesticks were all borrowed, for the little community possessed none of these things. By the evening of the 14th all was ready, and great was the joy of the sisters when they heard that they would not have to wait till the next day for the Presence of their Lord, but that the priest would bring Him that evening. With hearts full of love and gratitude they knelt around as the Blessed Sacrament was deposited in the small brown tabernacle in one of the rooms on the ground floor. The next day Bishop Wiseman came and said Mass for them there, and the Feast of St. Teresa, which brought this blessing to the little Society, has always been commemorated by it with great devotion.

With the Blessed Sacrament installed in their new home Mother Connelly felt ready for all things. Religious life was begun at once as fervently as possible, with all its usual practices, keeping silence, penances, reading of the Rule, instructions, recreations and spiritual duties.

"Hours were written out for each one as soon as possible, so as to secure the spiritual duties and recreations," says Sister Aloysia, and she adds: "The parish school was waiting for us, and was being taken care of by an old-fashioned person who seemed to me to be always carrying a cane in her hand. As soon as Miss Bowles was well enough she made a beginning in the school and we each went there in turn. It can easily be imagined how hard we had to work with our dear Mother for the first few weeks to make the place comfortable. And all day long she was engaged with workpeople, and writing letters, besides receiving visitors and priests who called, so that you may suppose how little time our Mother had for rest. Even the time of recreation which she tried always to spend with us was a great exertion for her, as she used to try to keep us from being dull by telling us tales, and doing all she could to make us cheerful and happy."

She was the life and soul of the small community, all of whom were much younger than herself. At this time she was thirty-seven years of age, and if she had lost the first freshness of youth she had gained in a certain tranquil power, and a radiant spirituality looked out from her countenance. Her expression in repose was one of firmness, serenity and peace, but the strong, kind lines of the mouth easily bent into a gracious smile, and the eyes quickly grew tender at the mention of any sorrow, or sparkled with the enjoyment of some piece of fun, or were grave in warning or rebuke.

Her children used to love to gaze upon her face, so beautiful and so spiritual that their hearts were at once

carried beyond mere externals to reverent and recollected thoughts.

" In the distribution of offices," Sister Aloysia tells us, " she named herself Infirmarian, an office which she filled for a long time. The care she showed to each one was so like that of a mother, and she thought of so many things that we felt as confiding and as safe as little children."

The great quality of motherhood was woven into her nature. Indeed, she was more motherly than others who had not a tithe of her intellectual power. The loving and considerate spirit which had always actuated her now took a more commanding form and the full power of her personality appeared.

" Of course she had her crosses," Sister Aloysia continues. " At first they came more from anxiety. Still they were crosses, and very soon they appeared in other ways. These you will hear more correctly from people who knew more than I did. I only relate what struck me at the time as being so beautiful and saint-like in her."

Some of the difficulties were caused by Miss Bowles, who was a recent convert, and who did not as yet understand the principles of religious obedience. On many points she differed in opinion from Mother Connelly, and being strong-willed and capable, she was inclined to urge her own views in opposition to those of her Superior. Mother Connelly saw the good qualities which she possessed and was perhaps (in the light of after events) too gentle in dealing with faults which she attributed to a lack of previous religious training.

" After we had been at Derby about three weeks," continues our narrative, " Mother Connelly had to go on business to Birmingham. Veronica returned with her,

as she did not wish to remain any longer. She had no vocation and so she was not happy. But in the evening Mother Connelly came back and brought with her two fresh postulants, who were afterwards Sister Frances Magdalen Miller, and Sister Stanislaus McDermott. It was a great help to our little party, as Sister Frances was accustomed to teaching in a school. Sister Stanislaus was strong, lively and good—a real child of our Lady from her infancy." At this time she was only sixteen years of age.

"It was but a simple and poor beginning," continues Sister Aloysia; "it might have disheartened many, but our dear Mother never showed the slightest fear but that our Lord would watch over us and send those whom He wanted to do His work. She used to make little remarks to that effect when I wondered how we should get along. I once heard her say that all her means were gone. She had spent all in furnishing the convent up to that time, for we had then been going on for some months, and though there were several persons who promised to be of great help in the Society, they failed to persevere. And though you could see how much it pained her when any one went away, yet she used to say, 'If they are not called by God they will do no good, so they must go.' But no sign of discouragement appeared. Her beautiful confidence and trust in God grew upon us so that the thought of not succeeding never entered into our minds, and this made us very happy and cheerful.

"As soon as the first few I have named were collected together Mother Connelly began to give us instructions and teach us all about religious life. She had everything to do, for we were such children, and had no one to look to for example, so all the work was hers. Our recreations were mostly spent in talking over the different acts of virtue we could make, and Mother Connelly was always so encouraging. If she saw a sister move quietly and religiously, she used to make some kind remark which

would teach more than a long instruction because it came at the right moment to make an impression. She used to praise closing the doors quietly, speaking with calmness, care in making little acts of poverty, etc. She was always on the watch to encourage or to teach us.

" Our Mother began to do the ordinary penances as soon as possible. We soon followed her example, and the first time we asked to do something she was so pleased, we might have conferred a favour on her. But she had to do everything first.

" I often think of those days when we would go to the community room after our work was done, and sit with Reverend Mother to sew. Every now and then she would repeat short acts of faith, hope and charity, or some other little prayer, aloud, that is loud enough for us to hear and follow in spirit. Her words used to sound so sweet and prayerful. You felt she was with our Lord all the time she was at work. I say work, for she did all kinds, from washing dishes to painting flowers. Many a time she came into the kitchen to teach the cook how to make something for dinner, for the poor cook was not very expert, never having been in such an employment before, and many a weary mess she got into, with cutting and scalding and spoiling which called forth much of our dear Mother's charity and assistance. I think there could be a whole book full of events of this kind both happy and interesting."

So the first weeks passed, swiftly and happily. Mother Connelly took her turn in the school, superintended all the work of the house and was employed by the priests in instructing some young women for the Sacraments.

The restraint of the past years of suspense was removed, and now that she was happy in the dawning of her true vocation, all her natural gaiety blossomed anew with a spiritual radiance that delighted her new family.

The young companions who had gathered round her

loved her as if she were their mother. When, in December, Bishop Wiseman gave the religious habit to her and to two others of the community, she said to them with simplicity: "As we are all novices now, we shall learn perfection together."

"But she was far advanced in perfection," wrote one of them, "and understood practically the science of the saints. From the first she taught us how to live with and for the Holy Child."

Several others soon joined the community—among them Sister Austin, who has already been referred to as a housemaid at Alton Towers. She came early in 1847, when Mother Connelly was still a novice. In her old age, she used to recall with affectionate devotion memories of her beloved Mother Foundress, telling how she used her authority as Superior to choose for herself all that was hardest and most menial; how her bright and joyous spirit made their recreations delightful, and how she was filled with zeal for God's greater glory in all things; that no trials, spiritual or temporal, seemed able to shake her loving confidence in God, and that her practice of poverty was most remarkable. The worst of everything she always managed to secure for herself.

One small instance of her delight in poverty is given:

"When the boots she had been wearing from the beginning began to wear out, a sister covered them with one big patch, or rather a piece of cloth put all over to hide the rags. Our dear Mother wore them with joy as a sweet act of poverty. (It must be remembered she had only just left every comfort.) Often have I seen her kiss her old patched clothes with great reverence. If any accident happened she was always calm. Once a rat trap that was shown to her snapped on her finger with its great iron teeth. She said nothing, though the

pain must have been severe. We never heard till afterwards how much she was hurt."

There was plenty to be done both in the convent and outside. The following letter written by Mother Connelly at Christmas time, 1846, to thank Lord Shrewsbury for gifts to the community gives some account of their work:

"I should have written yesterday to thank you for your remembrance of us, but Sunday is a *very busy* day with two hundred girls to lead to Church for High Mass after an hour's labour in teaching them, and from two o'clock until four in the afternoon teaching them to read, etc., etc. Much as we deplore the state of things which renders this necessary we cannot but acknowledge that it is the only way to get hold of the working class—the factory girls. With respect to our poor day-schools, they are going on very well, but we shall never get on without some pecuniary assistance. . . . We are so much obliged to you, dear Lord Shrewsbury, for all the kindnesses you have shown us. But you may be sure we shall do with you as we do with our dear Lord—the more He gives, the more we go on asking. . . .

"Yours most gratefully and humbly in the H.C. Jesus,

"Cornelia Connelly,

"S.H.C.J."

To these works for the poor there was added in the second year a small boarding school for "young ladies," who were joined by a few day-scholars.

Amid these activities the year of Mother Connelly's noviceship passed quickly by, and in December 1847 the Bishop wrote proposing to receive her religious vows.

The Feast of St. Thomas, December 21st, was fixed for the ceremony. Mother Connelly then renewed in the presence of Bishop Wiseman the solemn vow of chastity she had taken in Rome, and made her religious vows of

perpetual poverty and obedience according to the Constitutions of the Society, reserving to herself the power, after prayer and the advice of her directors, to make any change in the Rule which might appear to her and to them to be desirable for the greater good of the Society.

The ceremony was followed by the solemn installation of Mother Connelly as Superior of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. A seat was placed within the sanctuary to which she was conducted by the Bishop, and at the foot of the altar she received the allegiance of the community which God had appointed her to govern, each sister kneeling at her feet, and with the entire devotion of her heart tendering her obedience.

CHAPTER VII

AT DERBY

1847–1848

My very dear Sisters,
Let us love one another and pray,
Let us love one another and be faithful,
Let us love one another and be humble,
Let us love one another and be filled with the Charity of God,
Let us love one another with God, in God and for God, and we shall thus be one with Him for all eternity.
Letter of Mother Connelly, February, 1851.

With her few companions, all full of fervour and good will, Mother Connelly now began to give more definite shape to the ideals she had formed for the Society. While training her novices in holiness she was most careful to respect the individual character of each one. She knew that the gifts of grace are founded on those of nature, and that each soul is capable of giving to God a special service and love which can be supplied by it alone. She had a horror of what she called "the tyranny of interfering between the soul and its Creator." Her idea of religious training was rather to encourage each soul to develop to the full the gifts of God within it and its power of coming into communication with Him. "Be yourselves," she would say to the sisters, "only make those selves all that God wants them to be."

The perfect individuality of her training is well exemplified by her treatment of Sister Maria Joseph Buckle, who entered the Society in 1848. Miss Buckle came to Derby to make a retreat which was given by Father Clough, S.J., in April of that year. At the end of the retreat

she felt an inward assurance that God wished her to enter the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She consulted Father Clough, who told her that the true spirit of St. Ignatius was in the Rules and that if he had to choose a convent for his own sister he would not wish for a more fervent community or a more admirable Superior.

At this time Miss Buckle was a recent convert, well-educated, critical, intellectual, affectionate, with high ideals of sanctity and a strong attraction to prayer. Her fine gifts were, however, obscured by habits of constant self-analysis, a subtle vanity, and a tendency to scruples. Such a disposition would go far on the road to sanctity if rightly guided, but she was bound to encounter many obstacles on the way. Treated with harshness, she would have easily become a prey to her imagination or have taken refuge in self-centred inefficiency and bitterness. Too much show of affection would have left her weak and have tempted her from her high ideals. Mother Connelly seems to have understood her from the first, and to have treated her with an enlightened firmness which did not take away the responsibility for her own development, but supplied her with just the right amount of stimulus, and preserved her from the singularities to which she was naturally inclined.

The account of her subsequent training shall be given in Sister Maria Joseph's own words :

" I came to the convent with a very good will to correct my faults and a determination to be a saint. But the faults of my character had been increased by a Protestant education, too much indulgence, and an over-eagerness that has always been the great obstacle to my perfection.

" In some characters nature and grace go the same way, and it is very difficult to distinguish between them. Mother Connelly saw this clearly in me, and did her best

to conquer my faults by what I then considered severity, but which I afterwards recognised was most beneficial.

" After my entrance I was given a class in the young ladies' school as well as in the parish school on Sundays. Mother Connelly was the only professed among the sisters, and her black veil was conspicuous among more than twenty white veils. Her assistant was Mother Emily (Bowles), a very different character. I was struck by her over-activity, and her constant reasoning upon matters where it would have been more perfect to obey. One of the first things I remember Reverend Mother telling me to do was to copy a map of the Desert of the Ancient Fathers with their cells, for she used to say that we must learn religious life from its first foundation, and copy their simplicity and obedience though we could not copy their austerities. She had a great devotion to St. Francis of Assisi and gave me his *Fioretti* in Italian, telling me to relate one of the stories every day at recreation.

" She studied, as she said, the way of God in a soul, and once when I complained of something in her conduct towards me which I thought a little too severe, she told me that all was for the good of my soul, and that the religious she loved the best were those whose obedience she most tried and whose humility she put to the severest tests. Indeed, I may say that if I have any merit or have gained any virtue in my long religious career, I owe it to the mixture of severity and kindness with which she treated me in my noviceship."

But though Mother Connelly knew how to exact self-renunciation and self-forgetfulness from those who were called to perfection, she was at the same time a most indulgent Superior to these young religious. The postulants used to find her as sympathising and affectionate in their early difficulties as the most tender of mothers.

Sister Maria Joseph continues:

"During the whole of my noviceship she was most gentle and kind, pitying my state of unhappiness on account of my scruples, for I was long under the trial of terrible scruples and darkness. For this reason she kept me as much as possible occupied in work that forced my attention away from myself. She was so patient over the mistakes I made and the faults I committed through my mind being full of troubled thoughts, that I wondered at her forbearance.

"She gave me a general permission to come to her at any hour of the day or night that I felt my terrors assail me. I did so, and I fear I disturbed her first sleep for some nights. Her kindness and patience with me I shall never forget. One night I awoke in some scrupulous fright and crept upstairs to her cell. She quieted me in a holy, motherly way, and then said, half laughing, as I went back to bed, 'Mind you don't tell Sister Joseph you have been here, or we shall both get a great scolding.' The good Infirmarian had often to keep watch over the door of her room to prevent Reverend Mother from being overdone by her novices and to guard a health so precious to us all."

Life in the convent was very orderly. Each one took her share of the housework, Mother Connelly sweeping the stairs and hall, and washing up dishes in the refectory, where the refectorian noted that she cleaned and polished better than any of the others. Then she taught for some hours in the school. In the afternoon she wrote letters, attended to the parlour and to other business, and saw the sisters who wished to speak to her. There was class for the novices every morning, and spiritual conference every day. The ordinary spiritual exercises of the Society were all in practice then, except that the Office of Our Lady was only said in private by those sisters who had time.

Sister Maria Joseph continues her reminiscences:

" Mother Connelly saw us all in private, and though she never would approve of any manifestation of conscience, we told her all that one might say in confidence to a mother. She told me that I had only to go on in the way I had begun under the direction of Bishop Grant. She became very much attached to both my parents, and my mother came again once or twice to make a retreat with us. She said they reminded her of the holy Patriarchs, and that my father was quite a saint in his simplicity and piety. He came for my Clothing on the Feast of the Sacred Heart and afterwards became a trustee of the convent at St. Leonards."

Obedience was at first a difficulty, as it often is to converts, so Sister Maria Joseph was supplied with endless occasions of mortifying her own will and judgment.

She writes :

" I was accustomed to give my opinions very freely upon matters under discussion. Mother Connelly gave me as a rule, ' not to give my opinion unasked in the community.' Thus I learned a little silence and interior mortification.

" I was very fond of writing down my thoughts in prose and verse, and would relieve myself of my fancies by pouring myself out on paper. She forbade me during several years to write a word of this kind without express permission, and it was not until long afterwards that she encouraged my talent for poetry. This was a very great mortification, but I think it was of real use to me.

" Like most converts, I was convinced that sanctity consisted chiefly in prayers and austerity. Prayer she gave me full leave for, and extra meditation. But instead of corporal penances, in permissions for which she was sparing, she gave me plenty of contradictions and humiliations, for which I am now very grateful.

" She was always very kind and sympathetic. I once told her of a great trouble that came upon me from a

relative without any fault on my part. She had been well used to weakness and imaginary troubles from me in my early religious life. 'What you have now,' she said, 'is a real suffering sent to you by God, not caused by your own fault or imagination. I will offer this precious jewel with you to Our Lord, and ask Him to place it and you in His Sacred Heart. Courage, confidence and silence.' "

Sister Maria Joseph found in the spirit of the Society she had joined the fulfilment of all her aspirations, and she retained to the end of her long religious life the child-like confidence and submission towards her Superiors which she had acquired in her noviceship. Her devoted loyalty to Mother Connelly never wavered through many trials.

A story is told which illustrates the simplicity of her obedience. In later years Mother Connelly was accustomed to transfer the nuns from one house to another with very little ceremony. She would sometimes call up a sister at recreation and say: "Sister, you will take the train this afternoon for ——," this being the first and only intimation of the change of abode. There were no formalities and no luggage. A parcel of immediate necessaries was soon made up, and the box followed later. One day Sister Maria Joseph was told in this way that she was to leave St. Leonards, but, either by some oversight or to try her, she was not told where she was to go —merely that she would be met in London. She obeyed simply without asking for any further information. In London she was met by two nuns who brought her a parcel to take to Blackpool, and were highly amused to find that she was ignorant of her destination.

We have seen that the Foundress cherished the spiritual attractions of her subjects when she was satisfied that they were genuine. Accordingly she allowed Sister Maria Joseph, who had a special devotion to the liturgy of the

Church from the beginning of her religious life, to recite the Divine Office daily. So faithful was she to this practice that for over forty years she never once omitted it. When she grew aged and feeble and nearly blind, her bent old form, with the breviary held up close to her one good eye, was a familiar sight in the convent chapel at Neuilly. Shortly before her death, the Superior coming into the choir found her there, and knowing that she was very unwell, said to her: "Mother dear, you are not well enough to be up; put away that book and go straight to bed." Without a word of pleading or remonstrance the beloved breviary was laid aside, and the unbroken devotion of a life interrupted for the first time.

Mother Maria Joseph's account of her impressions of Mother Connelly at Derby will be of interest. She writes:

"When I saw her first she had the full enjoyment of her genius, her spirits and her beautiful voice. Her beauty was striking. No one could pass her without being struck with her appearance. Her accent was slightly American. Her complexion was pale and her eyes dark, if not black. She impressed me at once with her deep spirituality and her power of attracting hearts to herself in order to lead them on to God."

At recreation all her delightful gifts appeared. She was as gay and bright then as she was reverent and recollected during the rest of the day. This hour was eagerly looked forward to by the novices, and was a time of real refreshment and happiness.

In spite of Mother Connelly's exterior joyousness, there was always some sorrow beneath the surface. Her heart yearned for her own children, especially for the two little ones whom their father had so unexpectedly removed from her care. She was full of compassion for them and she tried as far as she could to cheer them by her bright, loving letters.

Ady was happy at New Hall, but she missed her mother's care, and in a letter to Merty she describes herself as "very sad, it is so hard to be without Mama," and she complains of not having her mother beside her to help her with her letter and tell her what to say.

Merty was now becoming a source of anxiety. His school reports were unsatisfactory, and the faults he had so often been warned against were growing. In the very different circumstances of their lives his mother was losing touch with him. A breach had opened between them. It was agony to her, and in spite of her efforts it was widening. The following letter certainly asks too much of a schoolboy. It would have been better adapted to a novice in religion. Merty had written to his mother for an eye-glass and some pocket-money, and he had wanted her to hide the latter in a tin of cocoa. Mother Connelly takes this piece of childishness much too seriously, and treats it as a grave instance of duplicity.

She writes:

"My dear Merty,

"I have your second letter and was very glad to know that you had not been in a passion but once, but I feel sorry for that once. Try, my dear boy, to laugh at yourself as if it was another person. You would very likely have laughed if the same thing had happened to another, so why not laugh at yourself? Try another time to laugh when you are disposed to grow angry. I am quite sure the castles were blowing up in your imagination to make you waste, and worse than waste, your time. This is the way the devil hopes to make you useless and good for nothing. Put him down and show your anger to him, and not to your schoolfellows.

"What do you want with an eye-glass? Not to play flash with, I hope.

"There is one little thing in your letter that I do not

like. Merty, Merty, be open, and despise duplicity as belonging to the father of lies. Keep yourself in the presence of our good, good God, who is all truth, and gives the spirit of truth and simplicity to all who walk in His holy presence. Now, my dear boy, go to Mr. W., and explain with openness why you wished me to put the money in the cocoa. If you wished to hide it, why ask for it? Explain this to me with courage and generosity, and if there is anything to make you feel ashamed about it, do the penance that will cure you of ever doing the smallest action that will savour of deception. Oh, Merty, Merty, nothing so wounds my heart as to suppose you capable of any duplicity! But if it is so, make up for it with courage, and humble yourself to the Father Rector, and ask him to help you to purify your intentions and desires. There was no fault in asking for the ten shillings, and I should be so glad to send them to you, but never to conceal them or put them in the cocoa like a rogue! Oh, Merty, God sees into the cocoa and into our hearts. Then why ever want to deceive about anything? Oh, my dear child, cast your soul on God and ask Him to give you that one simple remembrance of His presence that unwraps all the windings of the heart, and makes us true as He is true. He delights in a single heart.

"Write to me at once and tell me if you have forgotten all that I said to you during the vacation. Have you forgotten how I explained to you the deliciousness of a pure conscience—of willing only what God wills? When our will is united to God we never have anything to conceal from those who love Him. All is open and bright as the sun. Write to me at once, and tell me you have humbled yourself before God and man.

"Ever your devoted mother in Christ,

"C. Connelly."

In the light of subsequent events we can see that Mother Connelly had grounds for anxiety about Merty's

character, but still her letter shows a want of sympathetic understanding that must have irritated the boy. This is the more surprising as her sympathy and understanding in dealing with children were usually exceptional. We must remember that many trials were weighing upon her at this time. The conduct of Mr. Connelly was beginning to cause grave apprehension for reasons which will be explained in the next chapter. At Derby there were other troubles of a pressing nature. Difficulties had arisen between the parish priests and the convent chaplain, an Italian priest, of whom more hereafter. Limits of jurisdiction were undefined and friction was constantly occurring and involving the community. Bishop Wiseman was transferred about this time to the London District, and thus his assistance was lost to the convent. Finally, the nuns found themselves unable to meet their financial liabilities, and it seemed as if they would be obliged to leave Derby.

On August 30th, 1848, when perplexities were multiplying, Bishop Wiseman wrote them a letter of good tidings. Speaking of the friction at Derby, he says:

"The whole [of your trouble] may be a storm raised by the devil, and may pass away at God's bidding. But it may be a call from God to move and settle elsewhere. We have many instances in the history of ancient foundations, of communities being driven from place to place before they reached their final resting-place. . . .

"At any rate, do not determine on an obstinate resistance, nor attach yourselves too eagerly and deeply to any place, but be ready to go wherever God may call you.

"I therefore tell you that, should you upon calm consideration, after prayer and supplication, after the Bishop [1] shall have given his award, find that it is more for your peace, for your salvation, and for the general

[1] Bishop Ullathorne, who had replaced Dr. Wiseman in the Midland District.

good of religion to leave your present situation, there is a place prepared, or nearly so, for your reception, where you will be not merely welcomed, but hailed with joy, as you are eagerly desired; where no persecution for money's sake will be raised, but rather sacrifices will be made for you.

"The place to which I allude is All Souls, at St. Leonards-on-Sea, near Hastings. The house is built, and will be quite complete by the end of September, suitable in every way for the purposes of your Order, except of course, that so large a school as can be had in a big town cannot be expected, a day school, of course, I mean. I do not want to tempt you by worldly prospects, but a certain amount of them assures peace, and that is a spiritual blessing to an infant establishment. I will therefore give a short outline of the circumstances under which this place has been procured and prepared.

"Suffice it to say that the Rev. John Jones has been able through private munificence to purchase ground, and build on it first a house, and now schools and a church, and that he has put the whole at my disposal for any Order or convent that I wish; and that on my naming yours, he has not only acceded to it, but has expressed himself most anxious to have you, or any of the religious on the spot, before he completely finishes the house, so that any alterations or improvements may be made.

"The ground consists of 14 acres, completely walled round in stone. Five acres are taken up by the building, gardens, etc.; the rest are good grass-land, affording pasturage for all the dairy wants of a large community; the gardens are large with plenty of trees, vegetables and even a hot-house. The land is situated on a cliff with nothing but a road and sands between it and the sea. The ground is secured beyond the road so that nothing can be built up in front.

"The house is solidly built and very large; one part is now occupied by Mr. Jones, and consists of two large

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rooms, one filled with a choice library, and several smaller rooms, offices, etc., communicating with the priests' rooms. Beyond and below is the convent, the largest room of which now forms the public chapel (with a separate entrance, etc.), but even so, very extensive. The buildings, though spacious and convenient, are not in good architectural taste; but all that is now being built, being under the direction of Mr. Wardale, is quite correct. The foundations of the church are laid, and the contract signed. The church and new schools are estimated at £13,000, with the finishing of the convent. The church consists of three aisles, with a distinct stalled conventual chapel, from which the three other chapels can be seen through screens, and which joins the convent by a pretty cloister. The whole is to be thoroughly warmed.

. . . . . .

"Such is the offer made to you for your community; and if the above has looked like an auctioneer's description, I must in fairness mention the disadvantages. They are the following: The house is not in a large town. But, on the other hand, while there is a good population near, there would be London to draw upon for subjects and pensioners.

"The situation is bleak and the air keen. This is true in winter, but the house is built for the place, kept low (two floors) and with covered communications between the different parts, and will be still more sheltered when the church is up. But on the other hand, there is a great want of a house for education near the sea; the complaint is made that we have none; there is good sea-bathing almost at the gate. Dr. Duke, a convert physician, quite at the head of his profession there, will give every attention to the health of the establishment. . . .

"Such, dear Rev. Mother, is the offer made; I do not wish anything to be done rashly, and therefore, all I now ask is that you should come with Sister Emily, or any other, and see the place. I will go with you; Mr. Jones

is there already, setting them to work. At the end of the week I go to Bristol to Dr. Henderson's consecration; I shall return about Tuesday; after that I could run over to St. Leonards with you.

"I hope you will recommend this matter to Almighty God, to the Divine Infant and His Blessed Mother. I must conclude, to save the post. Recommending myself to the prayers of all,

"I am ever, dear Rev. Mother,

"Yours very sincerely in Christ,

"✠ N. WISEMAN."

Bishop Ullathorne visited the convent at Derby in September. He expressed himself much pleased with the order of the community and schools, but judged that the temporal difficulties had gone too far to leave a hope of satisfactory adjustment. After taking some time to consider the matter, he advised Mother Connelly to accept Dr. Wiseman's offer and transfer the community to St. Leonards.

The news of the Bishop's decision was received by the nuns with very conflicting feelings. Mother Connelly saw only God's ruling in all that happened. "We are sisters of the Holy Child Jesus," she said. "What must we expect but opposition, persecution, and flight into Egypt!"

In November she went to see the property at St. Leonards. There was vouchsafed to her one of those trifling but consoling experiences which mean little to others but which impress the soul that receives them with confidence in the Divine protection. As she walked through the grounds, buildings and chapel of "All Souls," everything was familiar to her, and a sweet sense of home came over her spirit. She had seen it all beforehand in a dream and recognised each detail. Before evening she had accepted the good priest's offer, and had written the news to her novices at Derby. In

a letter full of gratitude she called upon them all to unite in thanks to God for providing for their little Society so beautiful a home.

The last few weeks at Derby were busy ones and full of minor vexations. It is extraordinarily characteristic of Mother Connelly that she arranged an eight days' retreat for the community in preparation for their removal. In the turmoil of the last days and the excitement of those to come she saw a danger for their recollection, and she felt for herself also the need of silence and prayer. So from November 29th till December 8th, when the convent might quite reasonably have been in a state of tumult and bustle, silence reigned in it unbroken. On December 10th the first detachment of sisters left for St. Leonards.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORM

1847–1848

Both of you ought to have persevered in what you both by mutual consent had vowed to God. But if he has fallen away from his holy purpose, at least do you persevere with unfailing constancy in the course you have begun.—ST. AUGUSTINE : *Letter to Ecdicia.*

THE REVEREND PIERCE CONNELLY, while keeping discreetly at a distance for the time, took a great interest in the progress of the new Society, and transmitted all the news of it to the family in America.

On January 1st, 1847, he had written to his brother :

" When I last wrote Cornelia—Sister Cornelia as she is called now—had not, I think, gone to her convent nor begun her little new Congregation of the Holy Child Jesus. God seems to have called her to a great work. May He give her all the wisdom and grace and strength she will have need of ! She was to have come to America, as I perhaps told you, but was afterwards enjoined by her director to come to England, where Dr. Wiseman has, much against her will, and even her judgment, made her take possession of a large and beautiful Convent, St. Mary's, at Derby. You may have seen a notice of it taken from the *Tablet*. She wanted to begin in a more humble and quiet way. May God take care of her and her holy companions ! She put on the religious dress for the first time about ten days ago. Bishop Wiseman clothed them.

" What a blessing to see God's purpose in all that has

been done and what a consolation to have her in the same country! Though I have not yet been once to see her. It is so different in a Protestant country that I have thought it best. In Rome, of course, every week or ten days I saw her. I said High Mass and Low Mass in the chapel of the Trinità very often.

"Adeline and Frank are at their schools now, as well as Merty, all well.

"You have heard no doubt of the fresh conversions, four more clergymen and a gentleman from Cambridge, Mr. Paley, grandson of the famous Dr. Paley. He is with me here as tutor to the young heir of Lord Shrewsbury.

"You have heard all that is said of the new Pope. It was a sad piece of news to us, the death of Gregory XVI, but we must bless God for such a glorious successor.

"I hope the chalice that the good Pope gave to Natchez reached the good Bishop safely. It is very sad, all you say about the dear old place. May God raise up convents of religious in the midst of them! Nothing can be done without them, nothing. Ah me! If we could see five hundred sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, as there are five hundred at least of Sisters of Charity! But in God's own time, in God's own time. Kiss my little godchild Nelie for me over and over again.

"You may be sure I often think of you in the Holy Mass (Sunday, St. John's especially, your Saint and your birthday).

"You ought to know it was no doing of Cornelia's, coming to England. She had only thought of America, and it was in obedience to her director. I heard from Sister Cornelia yesterday. She was well, working very hard."

Pierce Connelly was perfectly right in thinking that he ought to abstain from visits to or interference with the new convent. Unfortunately he did not persevere in this state of mind.

The favour shown to him by the late Pope and some of

the Cardinals had led to predictions of rapid ecclesiastical promotion for him, and his hopes had risen high. It was said that Lord Shrewsbury possessed sufficient influence at the Papal court to secure for his friend a Cardinal's hat. The death of Gregory XVI had dealt a blow to these hopes, and all Mr. Connelly's efforts to secure the special favour of the new Pope proved unavailing. He was grievously disappointed and became restless. A chaplaincy at Alton Towers, with plenty of dignified leisure, the opportunity of ministering to the poor country people around and a salary of £100 per annum failed to satisfy him for long. Then it was that his thoughts turned to Mother Connelly and her companions, and the idea of guiding them along the higher paths began to appeal to him as perhaps an interesting occupation.

As a first step to securing a hold over them, he wrote, in January 1847, to an intimate friend of his, the Reverend Dr. Samuele Asperti, then at the Collegio dei Nobili in Rome, begging him to come to England and take up the duties of chaplain to the community at Derby. He wrote at the same time to Mother Connelly telling her of his wish to provide her with a suitable chaplain, and extolling the qualities of his friend. To Mother Connelly Dr. Asperti was a complete stranger. But the important point at the moment was not the chaplain, but the intervention of Pierce Connelly in the affairs of the community. She would have acted more prudently if she had realised this and given him to understand that all such meddling would be unwelcome. As it was she yielded, and after having obtained the permission of the Bishop, she sent a letter to Dr. Asperti, through Mr. Connelly, seconding his request to that priest to become their chaplain.

She had made a false step, but it would be easy to judge it too severely. Even to her clear, straightforward mind the readjustment of relations towards one who for fifteen years had claimed her submission by every title of love and duty must have been a hard task.

Encouraged by his initial success, Pierce Connelly suddenly appeared at the convent on March 4th, accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Henry Winter, his confessor and fellow chaplain at Alton. The visit was wholly unexpected by the community and by their Superior, and they remonstrated strongly against any repetition of it, as most unsuitable. The Bishop probably requested Mr. Connelly to adopt a more regular procedure before attempting to see the Reverend Mother again, for Mr. Connelly then addressed an angry letter to her, complaining of insults he had received, and implying that the Bishop wished to prevent them from acting together with regard to the children. From this time he became increasingly hostile to Dr. Wiseman. His next step was dictated by the hope that Mother Connelly would be more independent of the Bishop after her religious profession. He wrote to Dr. Wiseman to demand that she should make at once the vows of poverty and obedience. This the Bishop refused, explaining that the canon law required a full year of noviceship before profession.

Mr. Connelly was not accustomed to be thwarted. He brooded over the Bishop's reply until an entirely false conception of the situation took possession of his mind. He seems to have forgotten that he had relinquished authority over Mother Connelly, and he now took measures to resume it. By October he had entirely changed his mind about her profession, and drew up a protest against her taking the religious vows at all, on the ground that he would be responsible for any debts that she or her congregation might contract. When this failed, he had recourse to a more alarming expedient. Pretending that he had discovered a plot on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to take the children out of his hands, he suddenly removed them from their respective schools, and, without a word of notice to their mother, " fled with them to Italy." Her anxiety on hearing of these unaccountable proceedings may be imagined, for Mr.

Connelly would not allow the children to communicate with her. His intention was, as he afterwards wrote, to secure them as the best means of getting hold of their mother. Once more the natural and spiritual claims upon her met in violent conflict, and the temptation to recover her children at any cost pursued her. But they were out of her power. Pierce Connelly had them in legal and actual possession, and openly declared that he would not give them up unless she returned to him. She dared not trust her own heart lest its love for them might make her a traitor to the solemn obligations of her religious profession. Nerving her soul by meditation on the Passion and on the Mother of Sorrows, she bound herself by the following heroic vow :

" January 21st, 1848 : In union with my crucified Lord and by His most Precious Blood; in adoration, satisfaction, thanksgiving and petition, I, Cornelia, vow to have no future intercourse with my children and their father, beyond what is for the greater glory of God, and is His manifest will made known through my director, and in case of doubt on his part through my extraordinary [confessor]."

As time went on no news of the children came, but other reports of a most disquieting nature reached the convent. Mother Connelly heard that Pierce was in Rome, and that, relying on his old friendship with Cardinal Fransoni, the Prefect of Propaganda, he was endeavouring to obtain modifications in the Rules of the Society, and especially that the convent should be exempt from episcopal visitation. His resentment of the authority of the Bishop over a religious community in his diocese was changing into a sense of personal injury, and his determination to secure his own dominion over the Order was becoming a mania. As soon as these rumours reached Mother Connelly she wrote to Propaganda to protest against his action, and

to object to his being considered as in any way acting on her behalf.

Still she was far from suspecting the lengths to which he was prepared to go to secure his hold upon her and the Society. He was at that moment in Rome, actually posing as their founder, and, not content with endeavouring to change their Rule, he was seeking the approbation of a Rule which he had himself drawn up with the design of imposing it upon them.

Propaganda wrote to Bishop Wiseman for information, forwarding to him a copy of Mr. Connelly's Constitutions. His action in presenting these Constitutions and in proclaiming himself the Founder of the Society was unknown at the time in England. In the month of May a letter to Lord Shrewsbury revealed it. The sequel is related in a letter from Dr. Asperti to Propaganda dated May 10th, 1848. He writes:

"A few days ago it became known, through a letter of Mr. Connelly to the Shrewsbury family that he was trying to obtain in Rome the approval of a Rule with certain modifications. The Mother Superior was astonished, and sent me at once to London to see what Bishop Walsh and Bishop Wiseman knew of the matter. They showed me the Rules which had been printed in Rome and sent to them, and as I expressed my astonishment at seeing them, they asked me whether Mother Connelly knew nothing of this Rule, and on my replying that to us (at Derby) it was absolutely new, they did not know what to say or think."

Confiding in the soothing influence of Lord Shrewsbury upon him, Mother Connelly wrote:

"My dear Lord [Shrewsbury],

"I should like to write to you on many things concerning Mr. Connelly, and as I know so well your

happy and holy influence upon him, and your true friendship for us both, it is a comfort to me to do so, and I feel it will not offend you.

" I, however, wish at this moment to speak only of one subject, and that is my wish that he should give up any interference with our Convent or our Rule. His visit to Rome has been only time and money thrown away, so far as we are concerned, and indeed, as soon as I knew what he was doing at Rome I was obliged to write to the Cardinal of Propaganda to prevent anything being done at present. Had anything been done I should not have accepted it, since it was not with my knowledge or consent that it had been proposed.

" As I told Dr. Winter, I shall write again to Propaganda, but it will be as before, to decline any interference in the Rule or any additions or changes of the Rule which I brought with me from Rome approved by the Cardinal. This is all we require at present. . . .

" Will you then, my dear Lord, explain all this to him in your own gentle, holy way, and induce him to turn his heart all to his flock for the love of God?

" I have much more that I wish to say to you, but I cannot now do anything more than undeceive Mr. Connelly in his hopes *of ever having anything more to do with our Convent or our Rule.*

" May Almighty God reward you, my dear Lord, for all your kindness, and I trust He will return richly all you may do to assist me in my present troubles."

Towards the end of May, Mr. Connelly arrived in England, " fortified," as he wrote, " with the authority of Pius IX " to see Mother Connelly, " with a present and the Apostolic Blessing to give her from the Pope." The correct course would have been for him to have applied to the Bishop with these credentials, when he would, of course, have obtained facilities for an interview with her. Being unwilling to apply personally to Dr. Wiseman, for

whom he had conceived an intense dislike, he requested his confessor, Dr. Winter, to obtain the necessary permission. Dr. Wiseman had now been appointed temporarily Vicar Apostolic of the London District, and had his hands full of other business. He therefore merely sent a note to Dr. Asperti telling him to "look to the matter."

After waiting a few days and hearing nothing, on June 3rd Mr. Connelly went to the convent, saw the chaplain, and demanded an immediate interview with the Superior. His demand was refused. It was said that Mr. Connelly's action in removing the children had led the Italian chaplain to suspect him of a design to kidnap their mother.

However this may be, Mr. Connelly, infuriated by the refusal, remained for six hours in the convent parlour, violently reiterating his demand. When at last he departed he was vowing vengeance on the convent, on Dr. Asperti, and above all on Bishop Wiseman, whom for some reason he chose to consider responsible for all his troubles.

In her cell above, or on her prie-dieu, Mother Connelly was silently fighting one of the supreme battles of her life.

She knew that the fate of her children was hanging in the balance. But there was her vow to God, and her first duty was to Him. She needed all the faith and trust now grown habitual to her, as she prayed in her little cell with a chill terror at her heart while her husband raged in the parlour below.

Dr. Asperti had turned out to be no tool in the hands of Pierce Connelly, and he was never forgiven. Henceforward no calumny was too dark with which to blacken his name, and in Mr. Connelly's letters "very dear Don Samuele" changes to "that villain Asperti."

In answer to a note of sympathy from Lord Shrewsbury Mother Connelly wrote :

"*St. Mary's Convent, Derby,*
"*June 16th,* 1848.

"My dear Lord,

"It is very good of you to write to me so kindly. I should have preferred going on in the same way with Mr. Connelly, letting time clear up all things. But now, circumstances have made it my duty to take a decisive step with him, which will be more useful in the end, though at the moment he will be wounded. Every other means proved useless, only exciting him the more. I have now destroyed every hope he may have of ever having any authority over the convent, and shown it in the clearest way. I wrote also to Dr. Wiseman, begging his assistance in the matter, and he will talk about it to you.

"When this is done, and Mr. Connelly has proved his sincerity by sending my little girl to me, he may then have the necessary intercourse by letter, and even an interview.

"You may imagine, my dear Lord Shrewsbury, how much all this costs to my feelings, the more so, having so many things to struggle against at this moment. . . . Your kindness is indeed a great consolation in the midst of so many trials, which, however, being all for God, will draw down His blessing."

By December the events which were related in the last chapter had resulted in the removal of the community from Derby to St. Leonards, in the London District. On hearing of this possibility, Mr. Connelly had sent the following letter to Bishop Ullathorne:

"*December 4th,* 1848.

"My dear Lord Bishop,

"It has pleased Almighty God, more than once, as it appears to me, to call me to hard trials. If I hesitated for a little it was only to be certain of my duty. Once satisfied of that, I have never yet shrunk back. It seems

to me that perhaps I am now to be called to a harder one than ever. But at least, blessed be God, it is upon principles, which, unlike dogmas or matters of discipline, are too clear for anyone to doubt about.

"I am a man, a husband, and a father, before I am a priest, and my first duties cannot be abandoned. Faith, fidelity and honour I will never forsake, nor will I forsake the wife I vowed to protect for life, the mother of my children. . . . The principles for which I left that saintly person, and gave her up, meaning it for God, have been, I will not say corrupted, but rooted up.

"I hear she is about to leave Your Lordship's jurisdiction to come again under that of Dr. Wiseman. My object in writing is to beg Your Lordship to prevent this if possible. . . .

"If the laws of justice and honour cannot be at once enforced by the authorities of the Church, I am determined to apply to those of the country. My course is decided on. I do not ask, I do not wish Your Lordship to do anything or to refrain from anything out of personal regards. I am perfectly confident that you will not respect me the less, even though you should think me mistaken in the course I now take, after having more than a year ago declared that I might be driven to it.

"I am, my dear Lord Bishop,

"Most respectfully and faithfully,

"Your Lordship's humble servant,

"PIERCE CONNELLY.

"P.S.—The conditions upon which I am still willing to take no further steps to bring her back under my protection as her husband and the father of her young children:

"1st. A solemn engagement (private) to have hereafter no communication by word or writing, direct or indirect, with Bishop Wiseman, Dr. Asperti, X or Z. . . .

"2nd. Free intercourse, with a sacred observance of

the laws of trust and secrecy, by letter and by personal visits in the presence of my children, or some other person, as at Rome after I was admitted to the holy priesthood, with the express authority of His Holiness Gregory XVI."

To this extraordinary letter Bishop Ullathorne wrote a calm and reasonable reply, informing Mr. Connelly that he had no longer any jurisdiction over the community, some of whom had already gone to St. Leonards, to be followed in a few days by the rest. At the same time, he exhorts him to prudence in so serious a business, and concludes: "Let me beg you to consider the whole circumstances of your position before acting in these matters, and to consider them in the sight of Almighty God."

Mr. Connelly's conditions were, of course, impossible. When he was informed that no religious could be exempted from the authority of her ecclesiastical Superior, all reason and self-control forsook him. He swore to ruin the convent and break up the Order.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORM (*continued*)

1848–1851

Try to bear peacefully this heavy tribulation which God has permitted to come upon you, for the great benefit, doubtless, of your soul, and keep yourself faithful to the graces you have received in such abundance.—*Letter of Cardinal Patrizi to Mother Connelly.*

BEFORE the end of the year 1848 Pierce Connelly had instituted proceedings in the Court of Arches, then the ecclesiastical court of the Church of England, to reclaim his wife.

Bishop Wiseman, writing to Lord Shrewsbury (January 8th, 1849), deplores the conduct of Mr. Connelly, and explains the situation.

"The Church never sanctions a married man's becoming a priest, without his wife *at least* taking a vow of chastity, but I think I can say never without her embracing the religious state, unless they stipulate to live in different countries. The old Canon Law, long before the Reformation, decreed this. Mr. Connelly had given his full consent to Mrs. Connelly's taking vows (I have it in his writing), and when he took Orders, he knew that to be an inevitable consequence. He had by this lost all power to protest against what he had himself accepted as a condition for his own ordination.

"2nd. In addition to this, Mr. Connelly signed at Rome a deed of separation which made Mrs. Connelly completely independent of him, and in fact, so far as the Church permits, severed them completely. He has no rights as a husband whatever before the Church, yet

he assumes all authority over Mrs. Connelly as though they were merely living separated in the world by consent. . . .

"His letters will abundantly disprove every charge, and, I hope, throw the whole odium upon the unfortunate man himself who, knowing of their existence, must be mad, to go to law. But I fervently trust that they will never have to be produced. For I do not think the writ in common law will proceed—the grand jury have broken up, and I have other grounds for hope. But, my dear Lord, I do feel myself called to say that if on action, or otherwise, Mr. Connelly's letters are published, he will appear to Your Lordship and to others in a very different light from what he has been seen in till now. His shallowness, vanity, wild fanaticism (always *inspired* in what *he* does, and *opposed* by the *devil*), his presumption, and his ingratitude to the noble house that has given him its confidence, will I think make Your Lordship not regret that Providence has removed a *baleful* influence from the heir of your line. . . .

"Another remark I have to make. Mr. Connelly's letters show that it was not about *his children* that he grumbled or feared, but only about his power over the convent. In one letter he tells Mrs. Connelly that he had carried off the children as the *only way to get hold of her through them.* Good Dr. Winter thinks it was for their welfare he was so anxious. His letter will set that at rest.

"I am as anxious as any one can be to stop the disgraceful proceedings. But how? If Your Lordship can suggest any mode I will do my best, without sacrifice of duty, to carry it out.

"I am ever yours very sincerely in J.C.

"✠ N. Wiseman."

On January 25th, 1849, Mother Connelly was served with a writ citing her to appear in a suit for restitution of

conjugal rights at the promotion of Pierce Connelly. She wrote to the Bishop:

"*January 25th*, 1849.

"My dear Lord,

"I received the enclosed citation this morning. A respectable person brought it. He asked no questions excepting to know if I were the person cited. Pray let me know what is to be done.

"I feel that God alone can help me to bear up in this most wretched and afflicting affair. Yet I do not fear.... My dear Lord, what shall I say, or how can I make you understand all that I feel on this occasion? But you are my father, and the heart of such a father can understand all. May Almighty God reward you for all you have done, and are still doing for me.

"Believe me to remain, my dear Lord,

"Your faithful and grateful child in Christ,

"Cornelia Connelly."

The Bishop at once replied:

"*January 26th*, 1849.

"My dear Daughter in Christ,

"Courage and confidence in God! Fear nothing. The enemies of a disciple are to be those of his own house, and we must not be surprised if tribulation and trial come to us in the way most painful to our feelings. You will be fully instructed what to do. No personal appearance will be required in this suit. I will look after everything for you. I never turn my back on any one whom God has given into my care, especially in time of anxiety and trial.

"Pray to our Blessed Lady for her courage at the foot of the Cross.

"God bless you and the community.

"Yours very sincerely in Christ,

"✠ N. Wiseman."

Terrible reports were in circulation. It was rumoured that Mr. Connelly had publicly apostatised. In her distress Mother Connelly wrote again to the Bishop:

"*February 2nd*, 1849.

"I look with anxiety for some information on these miserable proceedings. . . .

"Please let me know when next you write, whether there is any certainty of Mr. Connelly having really apostatised, and if so, what could be done to keep my poor children out of Protestant hands? If he is to bear the expense of this lawsuit, he will soon come to an end of his property, and reduce the children to beggary. This might perhaps be an advantage to his soul."

"*London*,
"*February 5th*, 1849.

"My dear Daughter in Christ,

"I am sorry to have no particular news to send you about your heavy cross.

"With respect to Mr. Connelly there is nothing known. The Shrewsburys never hear from him, and do not know where he is. We have heard of no act of apostasy. . . .

"The affair will go on for a long time probably, as the process is a very tedious one in the ecclesiastical courts. You must, however, keep up your spirits, and leave the entire matter in the hands of God, Who will watch over you and your community, to whose prayers I recommend myself most specially.

"Believe me ever,

"Yours very sincerely in Christ,

"✠ N. Wiseman."

Two days later (February 7th) Mr. Connelly wrote to Dr. Winter:

"My dear Dr. Winter,

"I did not allude to your kind offer of mediation in my answer to your first letter, as I really did not see how you could then prudently do what alone I should be satisfied with. Things are now different. Wednesday last (31st) was the day Mrs. Connelly was summoned into public court. She made no appearance, of course. The lawyer's letter in my hands says: 'She may now be compelled by force to return . . . any agreement between you and her, or between either of you and any third person notwithstanding.' They must now, therefore, know that force can be used, and most surely it shall be used. And, from what we both know of Asperti's villainy, it is only too likely he, if left alone, will not let her out of his clutches till the officers of justice force her out of them.

"Things, however, need not be left wholly in his hands or Wiseman's, and it is in your power now without imprudence, to stop the proceedings (which I have given a written authority to publish with correspondence, etc.) by going with Mrs. Connelly to Albury Park, near Guildford, where a reception has been so kindly offered her, and thus further scandal will be avoided, with which all England will otherwise soon ring, and which you can bear witness, I have taken every means consistent with the attainment of common justice to myself and to my children, to avert.

"My dear Dr. Winter,

"Faithfully and affectionately yours,

"Pierce Connelly."

Dr. Winter naturally declined to assist Mr. Connelly in the manner suggested. The letter was premature, as an extension of time was granted to the defendant.

In May the case of *Connelly* versus *Connelly* came into the Court of Arches, before Sir Herbert Jenner Fust. The Plaintiff pressed his suit on the ground that he would be liable for any debts that might be contracted by Mrs.

Connelly. The Defendant's plea was based on the legal separation effected at Rome. The judge, while admitting that sentences of separation decreed by proper courts abroad would be entitled to consideration in the English courts, rejected the "Allegation" of the Defendant as inadmissible, and gave judgment in favour of the Plaintiff.

Mother Connelly's counsel at once lodged an appeal to the Privy Council against the decision of the Court of Arches. During the interval thus gained she was urged on all sides to fly from the country and seek safety in concealment. The Shrewsburys offered to provide her with the necessary means. But through all this terrible time her trust in God's protection never failed her. That He for whom she had left all things would forsake her in her extremity was unthinkable. So she calmly awaited events, and continued her duties in the community with that quiet dignity which always grew more sweet and tranquil in times of special trial.

A letter to Lady Shrewsbury shows the superb quietness of her trust in God.

"Dearest Lady Shrewsbury,

"How can I thank you enough for all your kind offers and for such manifestations of your true and highly valued friendship and generosity towards me? This requires more than a simple letter, and time and the opportunities that Almighty God may afford me can alone prove to you the truth of my gratitude, which will never be the less for not being able to act more upon your generosity.

"I think you and dear Lord Shrewsbury must now see that nothing would have a good effect in England, as the scandalous report is already widely spread. Indeed, on the contrary, by going abroad it would be more widely spread, and return to England no doubt greatly exaggerated. Besides, dear Lady Shrewsbury, a flight like this would be an acknowledgment of some cause for flight, which would be contrary to the truth. We have nothing to fear. God

and the truth are on our side. I think only of the consequences to our convent, a question of twenty persons who are engaged with me in the establishment of this Order. You see at once that this would be an unfaithful and cowardly step on my part, which could be destructive to the convent, and in every sense give Mr. Connelly the advantage over us. *He would then have gained his point.*"

Thus with clear sense and dignity and courage Mother Connelly saw the right way and steadily pursued it. She had thought it more profitable for the peace and recollection of the community that they should be kept in ignorance of the trial. Only one or two of the elders, themselves not much more than twenty years of age, shared the secret and gave her their silent sympathy.

Long afterwards they told of her marvellous self-control, and how, in all the agony of her position, she never for one moment lost sight of what was fitting and holy, or let fall one word with which she could be reproached.

For the rest of the community, life went on as usual. Their Mother was always the centre of activity and joy and their refuge in small griefs. The following incident is related of her at this time. A young postulant was sitting at her feet one day in the garden. Acute homesickness had occasioned an outburst of tears, and as the young girl looked up at Mother Connelly's face, serene and bright as usual, she exclaimed impetuously, "Oh, Mother, I am sure *you* never have any troubles!"

So passed the months amid the lights and shades of everyday life. And every day the horizon was darkening for Catholics. Their entrance into political and social activity was jealously watched by the more bigoted party in the Established Church, for the Oxford Movement in turning all eyes towards the Catholic Church in England had also revived the smouldering hostility of many. This burst into flame at the close of 1850 on the restoration of the Hierarchy and the publication of Cardinal Wiseman's

famous pastoral, *From the Flaminian Gate*. For the moment people and Parliament lost their balance and went mad with "No-Popery" rage. The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on February 7th, 1851, by way of retort, and received the Royal Assent on August 1st.

While it was before the House, the Judicial Committee and the Lords of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council met to decide the fate of Cornelia Connelly.

There was not much ground for hope. The occasion was the least propitious possible for such a cause. The appeal was to be tried before the most Protestant Court of what was at that moment the most bigoted country in Europe. But Mother Connelly had trusted in God's protection, and it was now shown in a remarkable way. The counsel against her broke down miserably and inexplicably before the Court and were unable to make out their case.

So it came to pass that Cardinal Wiseman was able to write that evening to Mother Connelly:

"*London*,
"*Saturday, June 28th*, 1851.

"Dear Daughter in Christ,

"I have only just time to write to you that the Privy Council has *reversed* the judgment of the lower Court, so that at present all is safe.

"Yours in Christ,
"✠ N. Card. Wiseman."[1]

[1] The Privy Council decided that Mother Connelly's Allegation ought to be admitted by the Court of Arches. But they decreed that it should first be amended by the addition of some information as to the marriage law of Pennsylvania and the law of domicile in Rome. The appeal was therefore successful, but the larger question was once more at issue. Mr. Connelly could have pressed for the amendment of the Allegation and a new trial in the Court of Arches, but from this course he was debarred by lack of funds. He was already liable for the total costs of the proceedings up to date, and even these he was unable to meet. He was obliged to let the case drop, leaving the victory with Mother Connelly.

One of the most zealous in Mother Connelly's defence had been the noble and generous convert, Sir George Bowyer. Besides strenuously defending her cause, he had held himself in readiness to protect her in the event of an unfavourable verdict. He remained throughout her life a constant friend.

Pierce Connelly now completely lost his temper, and with it went almost all respect for truth and decency. The pendulum swung all the farther from the unbalanced enthusiasm of former days. He published pamphlet after pamphlet on the " detestable enormities " of Rome, in that style of lurid revelation which has always been the delight of the less reputable anti-Catholic associations. By these his cause was enthusiastically espoused, and a committee to collect funds for the payment of his law expenses was formed, but apparently did little to justify its existence.

In an open letter addressed to Lord Shrewsbury, and published in 1852, Pierce Connelly gives his " Reasons for Abjuring Allegiance to the See of Rome." Except for the tragedy of the whole affair they would be amusing.

A few extracts are subjoined :

" To burn heretics, whenever practicable and expedient (and it is now inculcated on the Roman Catholic children of England by command of Dr. Wiseman) is as binding as abstinence on a Friday."

" Any other religious vows [except perpetual vows made in an established community, solemnly acknowledged by the Pope as an Order of the Church of Rome] no matter with what solemnity of words or ceremonial they may be made, are only simple promises, which a bishop or priest can at any moment dispense from, at the pleasure of either party [?], the presumed consent or even the privity of the person who has made the vows being unnecessary " (p. 7).

" A Roman Catholic may any day have the duty of

shooting his Sovereign imposed upon him . . . or he may choose an 'agreeable director,' who will indulge him in poisoning his own father which, according to the Church, may occasionally be innocent and lawful" (pp. 12, 13).

"Though my allegiance to the Church of Rome was a delusion, and a culpable delusion, for it had its origin in carnal-mindedness and pride, it was most sincere" (p. 6).

Enough has been quoted to show the general tenor of these pamphlets. They were received with avidity by the section of the public that likes this kind of reading, and reviewed in the same spirit by the press of that section. Said the *Scottish Ecclesiastical Journal* for April, reviewing the *Reasons for Abjuring:*

"We have read nothing more eloquent, nothing more fearfully true, nothing more philosophically characteristic of Rome."

And the *Bulwark* for June:

"This is one of the most instructive and remarkable pamphlets which has appeared in modern times. It is written by a man evidently of intelligence and determination. . . . It should be showered over the country in thousands." . . .

It *was* showered over the country in thousands. The nineteenth edition at one shilling was followed by a cheap reprint, "To go by post for one penny. One guinea a hundred."

A single touch of pathos there is at the end of this sad document, recalling the sacred joys now so haplessly forfeited.

"Though I have not entered into the religious part, properly so-called, of the Papal System, it is not because I still cling to any single one of the distinctive doctrines of the Church of Rome; but that I have not forgotten the

awful regard with which I ever approached them, during my great delusion. Their mysterious fascination of soul and sense must have been felt to be imagined. God only knows how my whole being was bowed down before what I believed His Real Presence in the Mass, how I almost seemed to myself sensible of angels kneeling around me, when I lifted up the Host to be adored. And I cannot but respect the deep sincerity of such faith in others; however I can no longer hold it, when all the visionary basis it was built upon is gone for ever" (p. 35).

Pierce Connelly made a final appeal to the House of Commons in 1852, in terms so gross and slanderous that a debate was held as to whether it ought to be printed. Nothing came of it, so he continued his campaign against the Church and convents for a time.

After a year or two his activity subsided, and he went to Italy with his three children, whom he succeeded in withdrawing from their religion as well as from their allegiance to their mother. He acted as Rector of the American Protestant Episcopalian Church in Florence until his death in 1883. His resentment against Mother Connelly gradually abated. He wrote to her in 1853 begging her to return to him. After that silence fell between them, but he wrote kindly to the convent when informed of her death.

It would be useless to comment on the suffering caused to Mother Connelly by the events just narrated, or on the ceaseless mental strain of nearly six years' duration which so severely tested her virtue. Henceforward this chapter of her life was sealed for ever.

But the loss and perversion of her children was a wound which never healed. When Adeline grew up, she spent a few weeks in the convent, but all intimacy had vanished.[1]

[1] After her father's death Adeline returned to the practice of her religion, and lived a most holy life devoted to good works. She died in 1900 of a cancer contracted while charitably nursing a poor woman.

It was the same with Frank. He visited his mother twice for a few hours. He had grown into a fine, handsome boy, and became later an eminent sculptor. His visits merely added to her sorrow. It speaks volumes for the personal fascination of Pierce Connelly that he was able to win and keep to the end the devoted affection of his children.

Mercer wrote to his mother once after he left Stonyhurst. As soon as he was old enough he returned to America and obtained employment in his uncle's office. When Mother Connelly heard that he had left his father, she consulted her ecclesiastical superiors as to the possibility of her going to America to reclaim her son. This through motives of prudence they refused to allow. In 1853 Mercer died of yellow fever before completing his twenty-first year. In connection with his death a mysterious circumstance is said to have occurred, which may well encourage us to hope that his mother's tears won mercy for him at last. The Providence which called her to prayer at the time of his death must have watched over his departing soul. The story is given as follows: "The tower-bell at St. Leonards was heard tolling at an unaccustomed hour. A sister, going into Mother Connelly's cell, inquired the reason. 'I do not know,' she replied, 'go and see who is ringing it.' The sister went, but quickly returned. 'No one is ringing the bell, Mother, it is ringing itself!' Mother Connelly was not one to give too ready credence to the marvellous. She assured herself of the truth of this statement and then said calmly, 'We should look upon this as a call to prayer. Let us pray for whatever soul may be in need.'"

In due course the intelligence reached her of Mercer's death. As far as the time could be calculated the hour of it had coincided with the strange tolling of the bell.

This death was a terrible grief to Mother Connelly, and for once she gave full course to her tears. From the nuns who came to her with words of sympathy, as she sat bewailing her son and would not be comforted, she

turned away. "I cannot help it," she sobbed. "None of you can understand the feelings of a mother!"

As for Pierce Connelly, the unhappy cause of so much sorrow and scandal, the astounding inconsistency of his words and writings forces upon us the conviction that he was not entirely responsible for his conduct. Though he failed so miserably in his high purpose, he had certainly made great sacrifices for it in sincerity and faith, and he became the instrument of much good as well as harm. To God, Whose mercies are above all His works, let us leave the judgment of that faithless, futile life, trusting that through the tears and prayers of his wife mercy was found for him at last.

CHAPTER X

ST. LEONARDS

1848–1851

Having taken leave of the Abbot, the Blessed Francis said unto Brother Masseo : " Let us go together to see this place which the Abbot hath now given unto us." And when they were come thither, they saw around the church many nettles and thorns.—*Little Flowers of St. Francis.*

The new home which had now been offered to Mother Connelly and her nuns presented a great contrast with their imposing residence amid the narrow streets of Derby. The Convent at St. Leonards consisted of low rambling buildings standing among green meadows on the top of a cliff, and looking straight down to the sea, some two hundred feet below. There was a small farm at the back, and an orchard and kitchen gardens. The whole scene, though without any striking features, had, and has, a quiet beauty of its own, depending largely on the exquisite variations of colour in the wide expanse of sea and sky.

The community from Derby arrived at St. Leonards in detachments just before Christmas, 1848. They were graciously received by a stately old priest, quaintly dressed according to the fashion of the day, in knee-breeches, a stand-up collar and frilled shirt-front, black silk stockings and buckled shoes. This was the Rev. John Jones, the owner of the property.

One of the children who came with the nuns has left on record her recollections :

" When we arrived Mother Teresa opened the door, in a white apron, as she had been helping in the kitchen. We

were taken to Mr. Jones's dining-room, where Reverend Mother and several of the sisters welcomed us. Mr. Jones was present while we had our supper, which we needed much. It was a comfortably furnished dining-room, with easy-chairs, a sofa and a handsome sideboard, also a pier-glass between the windows. There was a mirror over the fireplace too.

"After supper we all went to bed, but as there were not enough bedsteads, some of us had to sleep on tables arranged for the occasion or on the top of sets of drawers.

"We were only two children, but the day after our arrival lessons began with as much regularity as if we had been a large school. Everything was done to make us happy. Reverend Mother herself superintended our studies, and examined our progress every month, when each one had to write a composition and present for inspection a piece of needlework done during the month.

"At first the workmen were busy all over the cloisters and passages, colouring and painting the walls. The place was full of scaffolding. Mr. Jones was constantly walking about, directing the men what to do next. He carried a cane with a silver top in his hand. He was very courteous and religious in his manners, and addressed the sisters as 'Dame' when he met them. He called us his two blue-bottles, as we were usually dressed in blue."

He was delighted with his new guests, and at once began his preparations to establish them in possession of the property. To Mr. Towneley, a great friend of his, and a nephew of Lady Stanley, he wrote:

"*All Souls,*
"*January 4th,* 1849.

"I am confident that you will rejoice to hear that the work of benevolence begun and seconded at the suggestion of your saintly aunt, Miss Bodenham, and some other pious friends, is at length brought to a successful termination

by the aid of your Bishop, Dr. Wiseman, in translating from Derby to All Souls a religious community. . . . I would fain add another debt of gratitude by obtaining permission to insert your name as one of the trustees to settle the estate and property of All Souls that I am conveying to the community."

The fact that already six communities in turn had accepted Mr. Jones's invitation to settle at St. Leonards, and had afterwards found it necessary to withdraw suggested possible difficulties in the future. But his welcome to Mother Connelly and her sisters was most cordial. For the moment all went happily.

Mother Connelly established order and regularity as soon as possible both in the community and in the school —not altogether an easy matter with the house in a state of confusion and workmen everywhere. Nor did the building proceed with great rapidity. For, as the men explained, whatever they built up one day they were sure to be told to pull down the next, " His Reverence always gets a better idea."

Mother Connelly encouraged the nuns to rise above difficulties and inconvenience. However novel the surroundings might be, she urged the importance of silence, recollection, punctuality and the exact performance of spiritual duties. To her it was of more importance that her nuns should be faithful to their Rule than that any earthly success should be achieved. In that Rule she had written : " Above all things it is necessary to maintain an interior spirit, which is the life and soul of our vocation." For this reason she set aside for prayer and spiritual duties nearly five hours of each day.

Soon after the installation at St. Leonards Bishop Wiseman sent Father Pius Melia, one of the exiled Italian Jesuits, to act as chaplain, removing Dr. Asperti, who returned to Italy. Father Melia was a good theologian and a learned man. He loved all ecclesiastical ceremonies

and helped Mother Connelly to implant in the community and school the liturgical spirit so dear to her own heart.

Though the convent and grounds were commodious, the community had at this time to endure the privations of poverty to the verge of starvation. After the debts at Derby had been paid the united funds of the whole Society amounted to £30. Mr. Jones, in offering the nuns a home, allowed them the use of the farm and garden, but did not otherwise provide for their maintenance.

Mother Connelly managed to provide generously for the few children in the convent, but the community were often in great need. When they were able to procure meat, the joint had to last a very long time, and a tradition survives of Mother Connelly going round the refectory serving the sisters from a dish, and saying with a bright smile to each one, " Bones ! Blessed be God ! "

Riches she dreaded, and once wrote : " God preserve us from not being always glad to feel the effects of Poverty; if it were otherwise we should indeed be wandering from Bethlehem."

Yet the straits they were in necessarily brought a certain anxiety. For she was now responsible for nearly thirty persons. Her novices were young and inexperienced and looked to her for everything. Many of them were converts and had been disowned by their families or had suffered much for their faith and vocation. Was she to cast them back destitute upon the world? There must have been moments when her whole being was chilled with that awful doubt which comes even to saints, and she must have wondered if what she was doing were really God's Will, or if she had been deceived.

We have seen how far the idea of founding an Order had been from her thoughts. She had been led on step by step, always in obedience to authority, always in opposition to her own wishes, and always without a clear

view of anything more than the duty immediately before her. She felt that she was but a tool in the hands of God, and it was this thought that gave her confidence, and enabled her to face all difficulties. She used to say, "The Society is not my work; I have but followed the Will of God as it was made known to me through obedience."

Her plans for the community were now developing, and though circumstances prevented the realisation of some of them, they show a comprehensive idealism which is very characteristic of her.

As she saw the needs of the Church in England, and as her knowledge of souls and their different capabilities increased, her heart expanded with the desire to make room for all vocations and to supply all needs. She wished the Society not to be confined to education, although education was its principal exterior occupation, but to undertake all spiritual works of mercy—visiting the sick and dying, instructing converts, preparing women and girls for the Sacraments, bringing up orphans, providing retreats for seculars, and training servants.

She also wished to set apart some of the religious to live a more contemplative life, reciting the Divine Office, keeping up perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and employing their free time in Church needlework, the painting of sacred subjects and the writing and translation of books. She made some beginning in this direction during the first year at Derby, but the great demand for apostolic work made the complete realisation of her plan impossible at the time.

She delighted to encourage every talent that could be of use in the service of God—gold embroidery and Church work of every kind, painting and even the designing and moulding of statues. She sent for an Italian artist from London to teach the nuns to mould statues in the hope that they might introduce something better than the clumsy and inartistic statues then made. But the work

proved too heavy and had to be given up. Although she had been keenly interested in the experiment, Mother Connelly showed no disappointment. "Well, if we can't do it ourselves—anyhow we know how it is done," she said cheerfully. She had the gift of inspiring others with her own gay enthusiasm and enterprise. Indeed, a Superior who knew her intimately spoke of this influence as one of her greatest talents. "She was essentially a pioneer. She could interest others in a new scheme, and fill them with a belief in their own power to succeed. Then having begun the work, she would retire, leaving its completion and the credit of its prosperity to others."

She was very musical and devoted much care and attention to the Church choir. One who was at St. Leonards in 1850 reports:

"The singing was magnificent. Though I was accustomed to services well carried out I had never heard anything like it, and I never have since. Mother Connelly had a glorious voice. Her rendering of *Et Verbum Caro factum est* was an event to be remembered for a lifetime. Mother Emily and four or five other sisters had beautiful voices too, and so had the chaplain, Father Melia. The music was a great attraction to the seculars.

"When there was to be any special service, we were given lessons on it beforehand, so that we might understand everything. Even as small children we were trained to take an intelligent interest in the liturgy of the Church. Going to church was made a real joy to us and we loved it.

"In the beginning a few of the children were allowed as a great privilege to recite Our Lady's Office with the nuns. . . . In this way by the time they were twelve years old some of them knew and understood all the Latin of the Mass, the Sunday Vespers, the Office of Our Lady, and the Office of the Dead. It was all made a treat and not a task.

"Mother Connelly's piety was most attractive. The way in which the May devotions and processions were carried out made a lasting impression that could only produce good fruit in later years."

The chapel at this time often recalled the universality of the Catholic Church. Christina, ex-Queen of Spain, used to come there to Mass with her suite. At other times came Queen Marie Amélie, the exiled Queen of France, and Don Miguel of Braganza, the son of the King of Portugal. At Mass on Sundays were to be seen French nobles, Italian organ-grinders, German bandsmen and Irish coastguards. These with the American Superior, the Italian chaplain, and the English community and children made up a fairly representative congregation.

On the last of May 1849 the foundation stone of the elementary school was laid. This event was a joy to Mother Connelly, as she specially wished every foundation, when possible, to begin with work for the poor. She taught the sisters thus employed to consider themselves especially privileged in being chosen to care for those whom Our Lord most resembled on earth.

She was in no hurry to see large numbers in the boarding school, as she wished the novices to build up their own spiritual life before they undertook external work on any large scale. Besides this, even those who were professed were not all fit to teach at once. Mother Connelly realised this, and at a time when Catholic training colleges were only just beginning to be talked of, she put her nuns through a serious course of training in the principles and methods of teaching. Lay teachers were engaged to help in the elementary school, and to show the sisters how to teach. Lessons were also given by Mother Connelly and Mother Emily, who had a natural gift for instructing children.

In adhering to her principles of advancing slowly, Mother Connelly first came in conflict with the views of

the Rev. Mr. Jones. It was but natural that, as he neared the close of his life, he should wish to see his last and most cherished work progressing rapidly. He was anxious to have a large boarding and day school established at once, in addition to the elementary school, and he was disappointed to find that Mother Connelly did not respond with enthusiasm to his wishes. He began to talk openly of revoking his gift and leaving the property to others.

By February 1850 it was plain to all that the situation was becoming impossible. Mother Connelly called the sisters together, and laid before them the whole state of affairs. She told them that their future was quite uncertain, and that Our Lord might desire them to leave St. Leonards and once more seek a new home. In this great trouble, she said, they must have recourse to prayer that they might act according to God's holy will. She proposed a " strong novena " to our Lady of Sorrows, consisting of the *Miserere* and *Stabat Mater* and the Rosary of the Seven Dolours. This novena was accordingly begun on February 14th. The community, while confidently expecting an answer to their prayers, were far from anticipating the form it would take.

The Rev. Mr. Jones was in his usual health at the time, but on February 21st, when his housekeeper called him, he said he was feeling very ill. He begged her to call up his medical attendant, Dr. Duke, who was in the chapel hearing Mass.

The doctor saw at once that the old man was dying and sent a message to the chaplain. Reverend Mother and some of the nuns hastened to the room. When Mr. Jones saw them he held out his hand to Rev. Mother and asked her to forgive all his unkindness. He then said : " All is yours. The will is not changed and the old one is not destroyed." Reverend Mother, much overcome, thanked him for all he had done for the Society. At that moment the chaplain entered with the Blessed Sacrament.

Mr. Jones received the last Sacraments and soon afterwards peacefully expired.

It was arranged that the will should be read three months later in the presence of those concerned. Mr. Jones had told Mother Connelly that she would find the document in the library. But no will could be found. Day after day the search was renewed, every book was opened, every drawer examined—in vain. May 25th was the day fixed for the reading of the missing will. Again the sisters turned to Our Lady. She had already shown her wish that St. Leonards should be their home. Would she forsake them in this critical moment? On the night of May 24th Mother Connelly went to the library with another sister and looked once more among the papers in Mr. Jones's desk, where they had searched a hundred times before. To their astonishment the will was there! How they had overlooked it so many times, or how it came to be there now, remained a mystery. The *Te Deum* was at once intoned, waking the other sisters from their sleep. It was the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, and to her was attributed this great answer to prayer. The will was read on the following day. Its terms made Colonel Towneley (nephew of the original benefactress, Lady Stanley) heir and sole executor of the entire property. It was understood that he would carry out the charitable intentions of the deceased. No opposition was raised at the time, and the property remained in the possession of the Society.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY FOUNDATIONS. NEW DIFFICULTIES

1851–1866.

"Ah, Lord," she cried, "when wilt thou cease to sow our path with difficulties?" An answer came, "Do not complain, daughter, for it is thus that I treat my friends." "Alas, Lord," she replied, "perhaps that is why thou hast so few."—*Life of St. Teresa.*

THE Papal Brief re-establishing the Hierarchy in England was dated September 29th, 1850, and on September 30th Dr. Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster, was created Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church with the title of St. Pudentiana.

As soon as public affairs left him leisure to attend to the domestic concerns of his archdiocese, Cardinal Wiseman endeavoured to provide for the spiritual wants of the poor. Considering that the Society of the Holy Child Jesus was now sufficiently well established, he asked in 1851 for some sisters to teach in the Gate Street schools, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. Mother Connelly acceded readily to his request.

When she asked for pioneers to start this first colony, the whole community volunteered. To the few who were chosen she gave a short instruction, expressing her joy and pride that they should be called to work for the poor children of that great city. She herself went with the sisters to their new home, and wrote an account of it to St. Leonards. Only the attic and the basement were available for the community, the rest of the house being required for class rooms. There were other hardships, which the sisters felt more keenly, however.

To wear a religious habit in the streets of London in those days would have been to invite a pelting with stones and mud. They had to dress up in secular attire. This was a great mortification to them, and they looked forward to the evenings, when they resumed the religious habit. There was no money to be spared for neat outfits, so the cast-off clothing of the postulants was requisitioned. Probably some merriment at recreation hours accrued from their sacrifice. Anyway, strange figures in oddly assorted garments modestly made their way up and down the stairs of the old house in Gate Street. That house, if rickety and inconvenient, was fragrant with memories of Catholic heroism. In it had lived Richard Challoner through days of persecution, and its walls had seen many deeds of austere piety and perilous devotion.

All foundations which are to be lasting must, according to Mother Connelly's philosophy, bear the imprint of the cross, and all religious beginnings are usually attended by poverty, difficulties and sufferings. Those in London seem to have borne even more than their ordinary share of these blessings, but it is not our intention to follow the fortunes of the Society there, nor the vicissitudes which led to various changes of abode, until after forty years the community became established in Cavendish Square.

Something, however, must be said of a foundation which was begun in January 1852, and was destined to bring misfortune and sorrow on the Foundress. In response to the request of Canon Newsham, of St. Antony's Church, Liverpool, five sisters were sent to take charge of the schools of that mission, under Mother Emily Bowles as Superior. The priests of the mission were exceedingly kind and full of interest in the schools, and at first the work prospered in every way. After a few months the sisters were asked to take in addition the schools of St. Helens, and the number in the community was increased to seven.

But the five years she had spent in religion had not

taught Mother Emily prudence. Her brilliant abilities and the charm of her personality had won the hearts of the children and of many of the community at St. Leonards, and perhaps weighed unduly in her nomination as Superior. She may have been one of those who thought the Foundress too slow in her methods. In any case, she was determined to hurry on the progress of the work in Liverpool. After a year's residence in the town she removed the community nto a larger house and opened a young ladies' school, at the same time accepting the charge of two more parochial schools. Mother Connelly had her hands full of difficulties at St. Leonards at this time, and though she paid a hurried visit to Liverpool, she could not stay long enough to inform herself thoroughly of the state of affairs. She was obliged to accept, though with some misgivings, the representations of Mother Emily, and after multiplying recommendations to caution, to return to other business.

It was not long before Mother Emily began to entertain schemes on a still larger scale. She was aware that Mother Connelly considered the training of Catholic teachers a matter of the first importance, so she consulted friends as to the possibility of establishing a Training School in Liverpool and laid her plan before Mother Connelly, who gave her permission to look out for a suitable house. At the same time Mother Connelly impressed upon her the fact that the Society was poor, and would have to raise the money for the purchase and pay annual interest on it.

With this caution she sanctioned the search for suitable premises. Several were notified to her, and she was prepared to consider one valued at £3000, when she was called to Rome, on business concerning the Rule, in January 1854. Mother Lucy was appointed to the charge of the Society in its immediate needs during her absence.

It was at this juncture that the temptation came to Mother Emily. A large building known as Rupert House was put up for sale—price £5000. Mother Emily hastily obtained an unaccountable permission from Mother Lucy,

borrowed the money from her own brothers, and purchased the house, in direct contravention of the expressed views of her Superior.

A foundation begun in such a way was not likely to prosper. Troubles multiplied at Rupert House and Mother Connelly's visits and efforts did not succeed in remedying them. The community was soon deeply in debt. Mother Emily gave way under the stress. Before three years had passed she obtained dispensation from her vows and left the Society. Her transaction involved it in legal troubles, and in serious financial liabilities. It destroyed all hopes of a training-school for the Society in Liverpool, put an end to the work of the sisters in the elementary schools there and, after two years of anxiety and local difficulties, necessitated the removal of the community from the town.

But beyond these material misfortunes was the suffering caused to the Foundress by the defection of her first companion, her eldest daughter, whose brilliant gifts had been so full of promise. Such an experience is common in the beginning of religious Orders. It teaches them that God does not build on natural endowments, but rather on humility, obedience and prayer.

From the Liverpool troubles Mother Connelly had to turn her attention to difficulties at home, where a long and weary trial was awaiting her.

We have seen that Mr. Jones had bequeathed his whole property at St. Leonards to Mr. Charles Towneley, with the object, probably, of avoiding the technical difficulties involved in bequests for religious purposes. Colonel Towneley drew up and executed a deed of trust by which the property was devoted to the education of Catholic girls, under the direction of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. In 1851 Dr. Duke, a prominent member of the Catholic congregation, challenged the right of the community to the house and land, on the plea that Mr. Jones had solicited and received contributions towards the

erection of a parish church and schools, and that he had always intended to benefit the mission by his charity, rather than any particular religious Order. Dr. Duke wrote to Colonel Towneley expressing these views, in July 1851, and received a vigorous letter in reply.

From Colonel Towneley to Dr. Duke.

"*July 25th*, 1851.

"My dear Sir,

"I have received your letter with much surprise. I have before me now (in Mr. Jones's own handwriting) the views he (Mr. Jones) entertained regarding the Convent of St. Leonards, and the disposition of his property there and elsewhere; and they directly contradict every word of the first six pages of your letter. . . . You must therefore excuse me if I choose to follow the directions Mr. Jones has left in regard to his property, in his own handwriting, which distinctly correspond with the views he expressed during his life to my father, my aunt Lady Stanley, and myself, in preference to your version of them. . . . I am positively certain that Mr. Jones meant his property to be considered *conventual property*, and I shall treat it as such."

Finding Colonel Towneley thus determined, Dr. Duke turned his attack upon the nuns. Not only did he threaten to bring the case before the law—a procedure from which he was ultimately dissuaded by the Bishop—but he openly declared that the community had taken unjust possession of Mr. Jones's property, and actively enlisted public opinion against them. For the next thirteen years they were subjected to every kind of annoyance and incivility on this account. Even priests and bishops were led to misunderstand the circumstances and to blame Mother Connelly. Yet the trust deed had been drawn up without her knowledge or concurrence,

and she was informed by the lawyers that it was now irrevocable. Colonel Towneley had become the legal owner of the property, and he had repeatedly insisted, " The property is *mine* by Mr. Jones's will and I am determined to carry out what I know to have been his intentions. The property was perfectly free and unshackled by any obligation whatever—except the payment of his lawful debts. He had a perfect right to dispose of it as he chose. He constituted me the uncontrolled judge of his intention and administrator of his property. I, therefore, and not the community, am responsible for everything that has been done with that property."

To Mother Connelly the most painful and inexplicable feature of the controversy was the position taken up by her friend Cardinal Wiseman. His letter of 1848 seems to make it abundantly clear that he had then regarded the property as a gift to the community. Yet in 1851, for some unknown reason, he completely changed his attitude, and sided with the congregation against the nuns. He even claimed the right to appropriate part of the convent building for the purposes of a " villa " or seaside residence for the Archbishop and priests of the archdiocese, and actually sent workmen to make alterations there, without any reference to the Superior.

Some of the community became seriously troubled in conscience when their loyalty to their Foundress seemed to be in conflict with their duty to ecclesiastical authority. The Cardinal soon became angry and threatened severe measures. It was openly asserted that the Society would be suppressed. In the beginning of August 1851 a priest was sent to St. Leonards to give a retreat to the professed sisters with the object of persuading them to forsake their allegiance to Mother Connelly and to accede to the wishes of the Cardinal. It was a period of acute tension. Mother Connelly, after making sure of her position by competent advice, committed the matter to God, and drew her strength as usual from silence and prayer. " It was

wonderful," wrote an eye-witness, " to watch our Mother at these times. No one could understand how, with such deep affliction of soul, she was able to give her mind so completely to every passing duty."

At the moment when, humanly speaking, everything seemed lost, Providence intervened once more in favour of the Society. News arrived that Rome had withdrawn the district of Southwark, to which St. Leonards belonged, from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Westminster. Dr. Grant was appointed its first Bishop.

When Cardinal Wiseman was thus relieved of responsibility in the matter of the property, he renewed his friendly relations with the nuns. In answer to an invitation from Mother Connelly to visit the convent he wrote (March 1st, 1852) :

" It is impossible for me to go as far as St. Leonards before Easter, but after that I shall be glad to get a little quiet there, and then trust to show how little anything that has occurred has altered my feelings towards the community, to which I send my cordial blessing."

Dr. Duke now addressed himself to the new Bishop of Southwark, demanding the deposition of Mother Connelly and the restoration of the property to the mission. The whole character and policy of Dr. Grant tended towards peace, and for years he used every effort to secure some sort of compromise. This was far from satisfying Dr. Duke, who then sent appeal after appeal to the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. A few extracts will suffice to show the tenor of these documents.

" This community have been the most relentless adversaries of the mission " and have reduced it " almost to extinction by their hostility."

" The children of St. Leonards mission are a scandal in the Church and a reproach out of it. Yet the community who have seized all the funds destined for their use were

summoned to St. Leonards to minister to those very children."

"After depriving the congregation of all the benefits which the piety of the Founder had laboured to secure for them, the community, eager only to drive them [the children] away to some remote spot utterly unsuitable for the purposes of the mission, have displayed an ingenious enmity in thwarting every attempt to remedy the evils of which they themselves were the authors."

Their acts "seem to be more worthy of the bitterest enemies of our religion than of persons professedly devoted to its service." Of the money they have "confiscated" they have spent "not a shilling on the mission. . . . Mrs. Connelly's zeal for the interests of the community has blinded her to those of truth and justice."

Yet a statement drawn up by Colonel Towneley's legal adviser shows that the benefits conferred by the nuns on the mission up to that date amounted, at the lowest computation, to more than two thousand pounds.

By January 1863 Mother Connelly felt that the time had arrived for her to make some defence against the injurious reports which had continually gone to Rome, and which were capable of doing serious harm to the Order. She therefore wrote to Cardinal Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda, explaining her position. At the same time she sent a letter to Dr. Grant, offering, in the interests of peace, to provide a site for the erection of a separate church for the mission as well as a sum of £1500 towards the building expenses. She added :

"In concluding this letter, I must entreat Your Lordship's kind and just consideration of the sacrifices which the convent is prepared to make for the sake of peace and religion. All the benefit the community derives from the Trust Deed is their lodgment and the opportunity of serving the holy cause of religious education—and it may

surely be thought that these services in that cause are sufficient return for shelter. It is quite certain that the property at St. Leonards is settled on charitable Trusts for education, *not* for the convent; and if in that settlement there was any error or omission, it was on the part of those who prepared it (unintentionally no doubt), and not of the convent, who had nothing to do with the preparation of the Deed.

"We are, however, ready cheerfully and willingly to do all we can to atone for what is considered the error of others, and independently of this, to promote religion in this locality, and we hope we shall have this much credit for our conduct in the eyes of Your Lordship and of the Sacred Congregation.

"Humbly begging your blessing,
"I am, my Lord Bishop,
"Your faithful servant in J. C.,
"CORNELIA CONNELLY."

A year later, as no answer to her letter had been returned by the Sacred Congregation, Mother Connelly felt that she could not continue at St. Leonards under the dissatisfaction of her ecclesiastical superiors. The position was intolerable. She wrote to Colonel Towneley:

"*March 2nd*, 1864.

"MY DEAR COL. TOWNELEY,

"We are most anxious that you should leave nothing undone in order to come to a fair and clear understanding with the Sacred Congregation regarding our present position at St. Leonards, and perhaps it may facilitate the matter if I frankly state to you without further delay that we are quite willing the property should be sold and the community transferred elsewhere rather than continue in our present state, incurring the dissatisfaction of Rome, subject to constant misrepresentation and most injurious persecution here.

"We have devoted sixteen years to this establishment

and have made it what it is with only one object in view—the good of souls amongst our children and community and God's greater glory therein. It would be impossible to continue to gain this end, save in the usual protection of our Ecclesiastical Superiors and also in their satisfaction, and no temporal interest whatever could compensate for any want of peace and union with that authority which we shall ever hold sacred. Neither could the possession of any property, were it a hundredfold beyond the value of this, ever repay the suffering of persecution borne only for Christ's dear sake. . . .

"Either we must labour in peace for the extension of the Catholic truth and for the service of God in our vocation, or we must cease our work totally. Satan is strong in his persecutions, but our Blessed Lord is still stronger, and will show His will and His way to those who seek His glory beyond all temporal property.

"Forgive me for so strongly urging you to come to a final decision in the settlement with the Sacred Congregation, as upon this must depend all hope of future peace or good, and, in fact, all hope of our remaining here.

"I am, my dear Col. Towneley,
"Yours very faithfully in J. C.,
"CORNELIA CONNELLY."

It seemed as if God always tested her courage and endurance to the uttermost, and then sent deliverance. The Bishop of Nottingham, who had consented to act as one of the trustees of the St. Leonards property, now constituted himself the defender of the community. He went to Rome early in 1864 to lay the true state of the case before Propaganda. As soon as the Sacred Congregation understood the position in the light of actual documents, they gave their decision in favour of the community, at the same time accepting the generous proposals of Mother Connelly for the mission church.

The decision of the Sacred Congregation was at once carried into effect. But the seeds of distrust and enmity against the community had been scattered broadcast, and it was long before their fruit died away.

Dr. Duke did not live to see the building of the church in which he had been so painfully interested. He died in the autumn of 1864.

The opening of the new church for the mission took place on May 24th, 1866, Mother Connelly and the community being present at the ceremony.

Meanwhile the Society had been growing. By 1854 foundations had been made in Blackpool and Preston, and many applications for other foundations had been refused for want of subjects.

As the work of the Society expanded, Mother Connelly's heart grew with it, and she watched over her absent children with constant solicitude, strengthening them by letters to maintain the fervour with which they had offered their sacrifice, and at the same time watching with a mother's anxiety over their wants spiritual and temporal. Her great desire was that they might grow in heavenly knowledge, and cherish the interior spirit which was to be the "life and soul of their vocation." "We have given ourselves to God in religion," she wrote, "not to be anything less than perfect religious, not to be housekeepers, nor dressmakers, nor artists, nor musicians, nor schoolmistresses, nor authoresses, nor superiors." Her own interior spirit was exceedingly simple, and her prayer for her children was always that they might take the one true and simple view of things, understanding that the great object of their lives was to please God and to be wholly set upon doing His will.

In the daily duties laid upon them by obedience, she taught, they would find both the means of their own sanctification and the perfect accomplishment of God's will. But it needed the golden touch of love to transform ordinary things into a masterpiece for heaven.

"Let all be diligent in giving daily proofs of love this year," she wrote in 1854, "and as you step through the muddy streets, love God with your feet; and when your hands toil, love Him with your hands; and when you teach the little children, love Him in His little ones; and thus may you be blessed in each action and in each member with an abundance of Divine love, and purified and prepared in this world, as far as possible, to enjoy an eternity of love."

The sisters had to walk, in many cases, long distances to school and in all weathers. She could not rest till they were provided with strong boots and good waterproof cloaks.

"Let me hear how you are and what you are doing about your cloaks, etc.," she writes to the Superior in London; "I think you will do much better to see at what price you can buy black waterproof cloaks ready made. I am anxious about your comfort and warmth during the winter weather."

Superiors were young and inexperienced in those early days of the Society, and needed constant advice. She wished to satisfy herself that the sisters were really well shielded from the wind and snow, and she insisted on patterns of the proposed material being sent to her for her approval.

"I have run away from the community room," she says, "to write a line to say the enclosed is much the best, and it is waterproof. I have tried it for an hour and a half, pinned up double with a teaspoonful of water, which it held without being damped on the other side."

Her first care was always that the sisters should have the Blessed Sacrament under their roof, to be the centre of community life. When this was secured she wished

them to be as merry as possible. Sadness she looked upon both as a danger to the individual soul and an injury to the community, in which everyone ought to contribute to the joy of all. The Superior, she taught, must be careful to provide all that is necessary for the health and happiness of the community. It was for individuals to mortify themselves according to the inspirations of grace, but all could not do alike. Poverty there was to be, but not carelessness or neglect. Even frugal meals could be served up hot and well cooked, a necessity for persons who were working hard all day. She was persuaded of the importance of care in temporal matters in order that the body might prove a useful servant to the soul.

It is pleasant to note how the Foundress's motherly instincts were always peeping out through her exhortations to perfection, and some of her letters are an amusing mixture of spirituality and housekeeping. To the Superior in London she writes: October 26th. (She often neglects to date her letters by the year, and only writes the day of the month or week.)

"My dear——,

"I am delighted that you are so happy and getting at home at St. Ann's. I hope nothing may be left undone to secure regularity, silence, cleanliness and order. These are the marks of a good religious house. I hope, too, that you have merry recreations, and that the meals are well cooked and served up hot and good. Sister D. is not much of a cook, but she must try to manage well and do as Mother A. directs in all things.

"My comfort is that you have the Blessed Sacrament in the midst of you and ever waiting for you—in all troubles and anxieties He is your Friend and Adviser and will help you to bear the cross whenever it may come."

And again (October 14th) to the same:

" A happy St. Teresa to you all, some nice sayings of the Saint's own, a pleasant game and, above all, the sweet joy of God in the midst of you."

The first Superior sent to London was only twenty-two years of age, and the others were not much older at this time. Mother Connelly had to think for them about many details of management which would not ordinarily require the intervention of the Superior-General. More than ever she had to be the brain as well as the heart of the Society.

Yet she was no tyrant in details. When she placed a sister in office she trusted her thoroughly and gave large freedom. She encouraged the development of initiative, and though she was always ready with counsel where it was needed, she did not hamper her subjects by needless restrictions, or tease by small regulations. To young Superiors she writes repeatedly, " Pray about it, and then let me know what you think," or " Use your own judgment in this matter and write to me when you have decided." She knew that responsibility brought the best powers of each one into action. " It is most important," she said, " to make people happy in their office," and for the guidance of Superiors she wrote :

" Let her (the Superior) sustain a bright and joyful spirit, correcting efficaciously everything like melancholy, which never bears the good odour of the spirit of the Society. Let her sustain the true liberty of the children of God, a liberty delicate in the conscientious practice of virtue, and she will thus lead her subjects to become holy and useful to their neighbour. She must be very reserved in dispensing from the Rule, either for herself or for the sisters; still, when necessity exacts a dispensation, let her grant it with liberty of spirit and largeness of heart."

Her own health was beginning to give way under the strain of incessant business, and she became more and more solicitous for her nuns.

When she found that the work in crowded class-rooms—not as hygienic in those days as in our own—and the other hardships of the town life were telling on their health, she would, if possible, give them a short rest at St. Leonards. "Sisters A. and G. looked worn out. Send them down here for a week's rest as soon as the term is over. I will pay their fare if you cannot." This kind of invitation is of frequent occurrence in her letters.

The sisters were set to study in the intervals of teaching, for Mother Connelly's ideas of education far surpassed those then current in England. During the first years of the Society, and as long as her own rapidly multiplying business allowed her, she planned out their studies herself and examined their progress. "Take care that Sisters A. and G. and the others have their full study, and send me their papers every week," she writes.

It is always the same doctrine with her—that it is by the perfection of ordinary actions that religious please God and grow in sanctity, and that everything done in this spirit becomes an act of love. To one of the young sisters engaged in study she writes:

"I hope you will have a rich harvest to offer Our Lord this year from all the good resolutions of your retreat, and that you know all your verbs perfectly! . . . and moreover that every study you make is offered as an act of love and obedience. Say your verbs going from one place to another if your memory fails, for there is no certainty without them."

And again:

"My dear Sisters,

"I wish you all to get B. . . .'s *Grammar*. It is the most useful logical little thing to be found, and has reached the 8th edition without ever coming to our notice. I think we must make it a point of conscience to get certain specimens of the new books of the day, to send

from house to house, at least for a time, and just now when the march of teaching is going at such a rate. God grant we may march at an equal pace in the path of perfection."

These details may appear trivial, but they are required to complete the portrait we are trying to draw, and by far the greater part of life is made up of trifles. We have to realise the simplicity of Mother Connelly's spiritual outlook; and indeed all who would understand religious life must be prepared to relinquish the world's accepted division between what is important and what is not. To a soul advancing in the knowledge of God, His Will grows by degrees more absorbing, until prayer, study, accounts and housekeeping, mean much the same thing, and other distinctions fade away.

"He to whom all things are one, who referreth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace." (*Imitation of Christ*, I, iii.)

CHAPTER XII

SPIRITUAL LIFE AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The secret voice of Jesus is full true, and it maketh a soul true; there is no feigning in it, nor fancy, nor pride, nor hypocrisy; but gentleness, humility, peace, love and charity. And it is full of life, love and grace. . . . And it keepeth a soul in a wonderful reverence and a lovely beholding of Him.—Walter Hilton.

The formative period of Mother Connelly's life came to an end when, at Derby, she was installed as the mother and teacher of a new spiritual family. Her ambition had been the contemplative life,—as she expressed it later, " to live on this earth in His society, despising all earthly things, being spiritually crucified and sealed in faith, according to His own image," and, as far as we can judge, the mystical gifts had by this time been given to her in great fullness. Some who have studied her life have said that only the presence of these high graces could explain a fortitude so heroic and a peace so unfailing. From her own words, spoken in confidence to one of her nuns, we gather that she enjoyed a continual sense of the Presence of God, which was not interrupted even during sleep—that prayer with her was habitual and effortless—that a word upon the attributes of God was enough to capture her soul and fix it spell-bound in adoration—that though she carefully prepared her meditation, she was able to dwell upon a predetermined subject only for a few seconds, and then her soul took flight wherever God might guide it. All these things betray the supernatural heights of her prayer. Some of the accidentals of mysticism, its flowers dropped by the way, we know to have come to her—such as the title of her

Society supernaturally given in response to her longing to have it made lovely with the Name of Jesus—the smiles of the Holy Child which beamed down upon her from His picture, as she tried to express in the words of her Rule His spirit and His desires. Her children tell of signal graces won by her prayers, of peace restored to troubled minds by the mere pressure of her hand upon their heads or by her simple "God bless you."

Contemplatives are the simplest and soundest of all men in their practice of devotion. God has become all the world to them and heaven and earth are transfigured in His light. Mother Connelly had won through hard and strange ways to this haven of inward peace in which the second half of her life was spent. It has been conjectured that it was in that moment of spiritual exaltation before the death of her little son, in which she had offered up the sacrifice of all natural happiness, that her soul had first found God and in that supreme contact had understood that He would call her to great things.

Then came what we may well believe to be the "Dark Night" of her soul—years of bereavement, loneliness and anxiety. In the retreat at Grand Coteau she received, with the consciousness of religious vocation, graces which illumined the rest of her life and opened up a new epoch in her relations with God.

In the light of her own experience she used to recommend, to those of her children who were capable of understanding her, the deliberate practice of interior death, to be followed by a spiritual resurrection. By which she meant a voluntary detaching of the soul for a long time from indulgence in natural joys and self-pleasing, until, loosened from all the bonds of this world, it could rise to a new life, and see everything from a supernatural point of view. Then, she thought, it should relax something of its austere self-discipline and become a child again, simple and joyous, living its life in God. In this connection she constantly quoted the text: "Unless the

grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

Those who aim at union with God, she taught, must renounce not only the pleasures of the senses and the affections, but also those of the intellect, and even the joys of spiritual consolation, "loving in strength rather than in too much sweetness." When the soul has given up these things and lost the taste for everything but God, then "all things else" are given back to it in a new way, and it may use them all fearlessly for Him.

In the early days of her spiritual life she had received the grace to appreciate the value of suffering, and it was one of her fundamental principles that the sufferings that God sends are more sanctifying than any of our own choice. "Take the cross He sends, as it is, and not as you imagine it ought to be," she wrote, and was never tired of repeating. And again: "Voluntary penance is chiefly useful in enabling us to accept what God sends." She was accustomed to recite the *Laudate* whenever any special trial befell her, and her children used to recognise such occasions by the more than ordinary brightness of her face and manner.

Mystical writers tell of a second "Night" of the spirit—more terrible in its action than the first—which by means of anxiety, terror and temptation makes the soul turn in loathing from itself and lean in utter humility on God. It is possible that such a night was experienced by Mother Connelly during her sojourn at the Trinità. We know that she made her own at that time the words, "Unless the Lord had been my helper my soul had almost dwelt in hell," and that her imploring prayer was to be saved from delusion by "the holy justice of humility." Certain it is that this period was followed by new and higher graces and a settled peace, when God's healing presence flooded all the aching spaces of her soul. She admitted to one of her religious, in confidence, that from that time her soul had not been disturbed by passions,

and that through all the sufferings she had endured, its depths had remained unshaken and at peace. A passage from Abbé Saudreau seems to describe the state to which she had now arrived. "The tranquillity and quiet strength which perfect souls enjoy is largely due to the fact that they no longer feel the assaults of the passions or the opposition of the world as vividly as before." [1]

This extraordinary grace showed its effects on her exterior. Mother Maria Joseph tells us:

"Those who saw her for the first time were impressed with the indescribable appearance of sanctity which, increasingly towards the close of her life, seemed to radiate from her eyes and in her smile. This was particularly noticed by children."

"From the first time I saw her," wrote one, "I looked upon Mother Connelly with awe and reverence as upon a Saint. She had wonderful eyes, and as a child, I used to fancy those were the kind of eyes that saw angels and spiritual things. I thought, too, that she could see right into my soul when she looked at me."

Another who knew her from the early days of her religious life said:

"She would kneel for hours perfectly motionless on her prie-dieu, her eyes closed, or fixed with an intent gaze that certainly saw nothing of *this* world. I used to love to watch her and wonder if I should ever be able to pray like that. The most wonderful thing about her was her spirit of prayer. You could feel that her days were spent in the presence of God. Even the few small children in the boarding-school believed her to be a saint. And with it all she was so simple."

[1] Abbé Saudreau, *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life* (London, 1907), Vol. II, p. 127.

St. Teresa gives a description of a soul that has been raised to the highest state of prayer and union with God. The details resemble so closely what is related of Mother Connelly that we cannot refrain from making some quotations:

"The soul sees with certainty, in the way I have described, that They (the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity) dwell in its own centre and depths. . . . You may fancy that such a person is beside herself and her mind is so inebriated that she can care for nothing else. On the contrary, she is more ardent than ever in all that concerns God's service, and when she is at leisure she enjoys this blessed companionship. . . . Thus a certain person to whom this happened found she had improved in all the virtues. She discovered that whatever were her trials or labours, the centre of her soul was never moved from its resting place. . . . The accustomed movements of the faculties and imagination do not seem to take place in any way that can injure the soul or disturb its peace. . . . Our Lord gives (such souls) great fortitude, so that they never desert His service, nor the good resolutions they have made, which only seem to gather strength by trial, nor do their heart turn from them, even by the slightest movement of the will. . . . I feel certain that these graces are sent to strengthen our weakness, that we may imitate Him by suffering much. We always find that those nearest to Christ Our Lord bear the heaviest cross. . . . Such a one suffers much during this life, for whatever work she may perform, her soul has energy for far greater tasks, and goads her on to do more, so that all she can perform seems nothing to her." ("Interior Castle. Seventh Mansion.")

"Mother Connelly once told me," wrote a sister, "that when her vocation to religious life was beginning she longed to live with God in solitude and had thought of being a Carmelite." This is a common experience among

souls whom God is beginning to raise to union with Himself. The first touches of His love are so delightful that the soul, as it were, loses her balance, like a person in love, and cannot bear to be separated from the thought of Him by intercourse with creatures. When she grows stronger she sees clearly that love is better nourished by suffering than by sweetness, and then she has no longer any choice but the Will of God.

Because she had had so wide a spiritual experience of her own, Mother Connelly was able to understand others. She welcomed an attraction to prayer and solitude in the sisters, sometimes saying that the best religious in the Society were those who had begun by wishing to devote their lives wholly to contemplation. Yet she was firm in her belief that the mixed life, in which apostolic labours are rendered fruitful by prayer and contemplation, was the most perfect imitation of Christ, and the best school for His followers. She used to say that in St. Teresa's time the only Orders for women were contemplative, but it was her belief that if St. Teresa had lived in our day she would have chosen a mixed Order, in which she would have found scope for her zeal as well as time for prayer.

Mother Connelly studied the writings of St. Teresa, and used especially to dilate on the generosity of soul with which the Saint gave herself to God as a thing she wished to imitate herself and induce her children to imitate. St. Teresa's motto, " God alone," she adopted as her own, and always kept in her pocket-book the well-known maxims of the Saint, " Let nothing disturb thee," etc.

So well had she translated them into her own life that the sisters used to say, " Reverend Mother is never in a hurry." She would sit at her desk generally all the morning, and receive without a sign of impatience the hundred interruptions that came. No matter how often she was disturbed she never lost her tranquillity, but

returned to her letters or her accounts as if nothing had happened.

"A remarkable air of calmness pervaded her countenance," wrote one of her religious; "I have known her for thirty-one years, and have seen her deeply afflicted and tried in every way, but I may say I never saw her lay aside that calm dignity so much to be admired in one in authority. She was accustomed to perform her actions with an active quiet and a quiet activity that could only proceed from a soul deeply united with God."

"She seemed to be on the look-out to meet Our Lord everywhere," wrote another. "Whenever she passed a crucifix or any devotional object there was always a slight, reverent inclination of the head. Everything told of an interior spirit, of God as the centre of her daily life. This was particularly evident when the *Angelus* rang. That sudden call to prayer, which comes to us amid every variety of feeling and occupation, never found her unprepared. At the first sound of the bell, she appeared perfectly recollected, without effort or difficulty. The same interior spirit was apparent when she said grace before and after meals, and when she led the community to the chapel reciting the *De Profundis* her whole bearing was the same as if she were approaching the Communion rails."

Mother Connelly was a firm believer in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and in his Methods of Prayer as a foundation for the interior life, saying that they would lead on naturally to the highest forms of communion with God. She recommended that one of the fundamental meditations of the Exercises should be made by the religious on their monthly day of retreat, and that in this manner they should be always renewing the fervour of their annual retreat. We know that this was her own practice before she left the world. Still, she would never

lay upon any one hard-and-fast rules in the practice of prayer.

One of her religious writes on this subject:

"Recognising that the Holy Ghost is the only Teacher of this science of the Saints, she inculcated, above all, that we should learn to leave ourselves in order that the Holy Spirit might act in us."

She disapproved, therefore, of too minute direction in the matter of prayer. One day a novice, bewildered by all the "mechanism" of meditation, in which she had been instructed, asked her if she might not begin the colloquy before she came to the end of the meditation. "Make it all colloquy, my dear child, if you like," she replied, "and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit."

She encouraged high aspirations, and caused to be translated into English extracts from the mystical works of the holy Père Rigoleuc, S.J., which were published under the title *Walking with God*, though she would refuse the use of such books to those who were over-imaginative. In the preface she wrote to the above translation, she treats with the sure touch of personal experience of "that kingdom of peace within, where the soul's whisperings are answered by the King Himself giving abundantly that jubilee of heart which had not been bargained for in this life of accepted suffering." Yet as she grew in the knowledge of souls she recommended Superiors to speak more of abnegation and death to self than of union and prayer, as "these are attained more surely by generosity in self-sacrifice," and she reminded them that Our Lord did not say "Come and enjoy Me on Mount Thabor," but "Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me," even to Calvary.

She wrote of the Morning Offering words which she would have applied equally to the beginning of all prayer. "This should be brief and simple, tending immediately to the loving union of our will with the Divine Will."

To one sister she said, " Sit in silence before Our Lord and be more ready to listen than to talk." But she vigorously opposed the " prayer of indolence " and dreaming.

As a remedy, she proposed hard work of mind and body, and she used to tell the sisters of a novice she had known at the Trinità who was favoured with frequent ecstasies in her work of sweeping the cloister.

A remarkable feature of Mother Connelly's spirit was that she made so little distinction between the spiritual and practical work in her own life and that of her children. She made her work, prayer, and her prayer, work. Once she said to a novice, " I have two distinct additional preparations for the two great actions we have to perform, death and Holy Communion. The morning class I offer up as a preparation for death, and the evening drawing lessons I make a preparation for Holy Communion."

A sister writes :

" Once I went to her while she was painting, and as she looked very recollected I asked her of what she was thinking. ' I am offering this up,' she said, ' as a preparation for to-morrow's Communion.' "

Mother Connelly wished that the convents of the Holy Child Jesus should be like the house of Bethany, where the contemplative and active life were combined in the functions of Martha and Mary. Like St. Ignatius, she laboured to bring about a perfect union between these two states, after all not very difficult to reconcile, since " Martha and Mary are sisters, not enemies."

Though union with God is the primary object of religious life, it has to be achieved through the means of work as well as prayer. Work, she maintained, if done in the Presence of God, and with a spirit of abandonment to His Will becomes a help rather than a hindrance to prayer.

One day a sister was speaking to her of the ease with

which she had that morning made her meditation. Mother Connelly stopped her and said gently, " Was it you that prayed? Was it not Our Lord that prayed in you? Now go and do your work as if Someone else did it and not you, and ask Our Lord to act for you as well as He prays for you." At another time she said: " Neither work nor prayer is as it ought to be until it is God, and not you, who works and prays. Let Him reign in your soul and in every movement of your body: ' Not I but Christ in me.' "

" I have every reason to believe from her words at different times," writes Mother Maria Joseph, " that, like St. Teresa, she had obtained permission to make the vow to do always what was most perfect. She would pray and act with a decision and confidence that was very encouraging to those who depended on her for guidance. To see her calm and prayerful countenance, whether in prayer or at her work, it was easy to conclude that she was deeply united to God in all her thoughts and actions."

She used to say that it was " waste of time and waste of grace " to dream of the future or to brood over the past. With persevering humility she endeavoured to hide everything she possibly could of the graces she received, but love is hard to hide.

" Her love of God was almost seraphic," wrote a sister. " When speaking of Him, even at recreation, she would seem transported out of herself. She was very fond of the French hymns, particularly of the one beginning, ' Il n'est pour moi qu'un seul bien sur la terre.' This she often sang for us at recreation, her face becoming illuminated, and her whole soul pouring itself forth. As we listened to her and watched her joy in singing the praises of God, we felt almost raised from earth to Heaven. She had a beautiful voice which sounded spiritual as well as being rich and sweetly musical."

Sometimes after Holy Communion the nuns and children used to remark a brightness in her face that they considered supernatural. " I used to love to see her returning to her place after receiving Holy Communion," wrote one. " Such a bright, beautiful look was on her face, that many a time as a child I wondered if she were really looking at Our Lord and ' could see Him properly.' "

She was a daily communicant at a time when this practice was rare even in religious communities, and after the conclusion of Mass it was her custom to prolong her thanksgiving for an hour.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUAL LIFE AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
(continued)

And thus very often doth He show His face to me, one while in choir, one while on my couch, now at table, now in my cell, in outward disturbance, at work, in various employments, and He teacheth me always to simplify within all things that are without, and to change them into one strong interior gaze.—GERLAC PETERSEN: *Divine Soliloquies.*

ALTHOUGH Mother Connelly dreaded "multiplying devotions," by which she meant imposing upon one's self a number of vocal prayers as an obligation, she rejoiced in celebrating the mysteries of Our Lord's life and the seasons of the Church. She loved all the Saints, and would follow their festivals throughout the year with a joy and interest which flowed from, but did not break up, the simplicity of her spiritual life. In fact, the sisters used laughingly to say that she had as many Patron Saints as there were days in the year. Still, among so many, it was easy to pick out the special objects of her devotion.

First and foremost of these was the Holy Child Jesus. This attraction in one whose children had been taken from her under such painful circumstances illustrates the loving Providence of Him who said that they who do His Father's Will shall be to Him as brother and sister and mother. She always had on her desk the picture of the Divine Child in His Mother's arms which had smiled upon her in Rome.

Mother Connelly imitated the Hidden Life in her reticence about her own life in the world and in her love

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of humble labours. For about twenty-five years, until increasing work and ill-health made it impossible, she took her part in the manual work of the house. On Mondays she served the community at dinner with great diligence. This practice she continued even when enfeebled by age, and a sister relates how " quietly and gently " she served.

Once a week in the first years she rose at 4 a.m. with others of the community to help in the weekly washing, and she spent the mid-day recreation with the sisters in the laundry busily ironing. She would often enliven the work by inviting the others to race with her, thus uniting joyful simplicity with labour. The sisters used to say that her childlike gaiety was a special grace from the Infant Jesus, and it is an extraordinary trait in one who had suffered so much. In spite of the trials and anxieties constantly weighing upon her, she retained her youthful enjoyment of the simple pleasures that came in her way, and never absented herself from any of the little community festivities. She taught that even in sickness and in sorrow there should always be joy in the heart, and that a smile should show the sunshine of the soul. She even made it a point of Rule that everyone should cultivate a spirit of joy and spiritual contentment. Great was her delight when, at a picnic with the children at Toul, she rowed them on the Moselle in a boat. It recalled, as she said, the days of her own childhood.

Less than two years before her death she told some of the sisters that in her mind she still felt as young as ever, and had not lost the power of finding pleasure in the smallest thing. Indeed, her character was a wonderful mixture of greatness and simplicity, and to the end she displayed that youthfulness of spirit that has always characterised the Society she founded. Though occupied with great enterprises, she was amused and pleased with the least thing, and did not disdain to join in the games of the children. Indeed, she would some-

times endeavour to lessen the restraint of religious life for the younger members of the community by setting them to play a good round game at recreation, in which she would herself join with great spirit.

She had a wonderful gift of making work and recreation delightful. "It is almost impossible to convey in words an idea of her bright, joyous spirit," said one of her first companions, "or of the charm of her personality. Yet beneath it you were at all times conscious of a quiet, reverent strength which told of her union with God. You could not approach her without being reminded of His Presence."

Her consideration for others was extraordinary, and was shown even in trifling matters. One evening just before night prayers she slipped in the community room and fell rather heavily The next morning she took upon herself the caller's office, and to the astonishment of the sisters went round the cells to awaken them all. She wished in this way to set at rest their alarms about her, and show that she was not hurt.

She was always full of sympathy for every sorrow, and many people said that she made them feel as if she had nothing in the world to do but attend to them and help them.

"My impression when I first saw her was that I had found a mother."—"She inspired me with absolute confidence. I felt I could say anything to her."—"She was a most devoted mother, with a big understanding of one's troubles and difficulties."—"She was always so kind and accessible."—"She was such a mother." Such testimonies could be multiplied indefinitely. And they come from all kinds of sources, young and old, rich and poor, her own nuns, and strangers who had some chance intercourse with her.

She was always wide in her sympathies. Any trouble or distress appealed to her. She would assist the relations of the community with the most delicate kindness, rather

as if she were receiving than conferring a favour. At Christmas-time she would provide Christmas-trees with presents for each child in the elementary schools, and would delight in working for them herself, counting the gifts to see that no one was forgotten.

After the Holy Child Jesus, she loved to honour Our Lord in His Sacred Heart. This devotion had sunk into her soul in the early days of her conversion at Rome, and was increased by her connection with the Society of the Sacred Heart. One of the first privileges she asked and obtained for the community was that of having Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Friday of each month. Throughout the month of June and on every Friday in the year she caused special prayers to be recited in all the convents in honour of the Sacred Heart; and she had Its sacred image engraven on the cross worn by the professed sisters. The church of the Mother House she dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and the first hymn written and set to music in the Society, "Heart of the Holy Child, Hide me in Thee, etc.," unites her two favourite devotions.

She was accustomed to speak quite familiarly with Our Lord and the Saints, and said laughingly one day, "I never quarrel with Our Lord and Our Lady at the same time. If I am *out* with Our Lord I keep *in* with Our Lady, and so I am never entirely in desolation."

The artistic trend of her nature showed itself in her spiritual attractions. She delighted, for instance, in the singing of hymns, and she would spontaneously throw into artistic form such acts of homage. An onlooker describes how on the cool summer evenings she would go with the community after supper to the church steps facing the sea, and there they would sing hymn after hymn to Our Lady while the moon made a silver sparkling pathway across the sea. Now and then a boat, its sails gleaming like white wings, would glide across the brightness and be lost again in the night. Then she would

speak, in a way that her hearers never forgot, of the souls that come for a moment into our lives, and of the graces we can win for them by our prayers.

She was fond of the word " delicate " as applied to the service of God, and would speak of the delicate conscientiousness with which we should devote ourselves to His work. This was apparent in every detail of her own conduct. She could not bear the least appearance of negligence in the church or sacristy, and she would whisper a word of reproach if she saw a hasty genuflexion or a lack of recollected demeanour in church. She shrank, too, from a certain vulgarity in dealing with God which souls sometimes display. " Oh, how ungrateful it is to haggle with Our Lord over the daily crosses of this short pilgrimage ! " she exclaims in a letter. " Can we ever be grateful enough for being admitted to Vows and to the wearing of His livery ! "

At the same time, she was large in her views of God and His liberality. He had said " Ask and you shall receive," and she took Him at His word. Of course, therefore, she often obtained signal answers to her prayers.

Lists of her " special intentions " for various occasions remain to us. They are on a generous scale, and, interesting to note, they never contain any mention of her own personal needs. Evidently she knew in Whom she had believed, and could trust such matters to Him.

Of her devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows we have already spoken. The Dolour Rosary became through her influence a favourite devotion in the Society, and she used to say that she wished no convent in England to surpass those of the Holy Child in honouring His Mother.

Her admiration of St. Ignatius was very great, and may have been increased by a vivid dream in which she beheld the Saint in heaven. She thought he called her to his side, telling her that she was a true daughter of his, that his spirit was in her Rule, and that he had confided her to the care of his sons on earth.

She had several dreams of a similarly consoling character at different times in her life. Soon after her arrival at St. Leonards, she dreamed that she saw St. Michael standing above the church as if to protect it against all enemies. She had the church dedicated to St. Michael and all the Holy Angels, and so strong was her conviction that he would protect it that she would never allow the church to be insured, lest she should seem to doubt his care over it.

It was her belief that God sometimes deigns to console His children in dreams which come as messages from our heavenly country. If they brought joy and peace to the soul, she saw no harm in deriving encouragement from them.

But she was quick to detect the slightest touch of insincerity or delusion. A novice who was beginning to make a speciality of edifying dreams, was cut short and forbidden to refer to the subject again.

She had great faith in the protection of the Angels, and had a picture of a Guardian Angel fastened over the door of each cell. Her love and admiration for St. Gertrude rivalled that she felt for St. Teresa, and she used to tell the sisters that the spirit of St. Gertrude was most in accordance with the one she wished to see them imbibe, because it was formed on the liturgy of the Church; and she was eminently a Saint of the common life, living with her sisters in the daily performance of the duties of religion which were within the scope of our imitation. She would say that St. Gertrude was an extraordinary Saint in an ordinary way, as her beautiful visions were most of them interior and hidden from the knowledge of others. She was attracted by the Saint's childlike simplicity and the loving confidence with which she had recourse to Our Lord in all her needs.

She showed her humility in the way she habitually effaced herself in her direction of the sisters, always putting forward the sentiments and sayings of the Saints

in preference to her own. It was nearly always, "So the Saints tell us," or "So the Saints acted." One of the passages she was fond of repeating in this way was from St. Jane Frances de Chantal: "Whoever is faithful in withdrawing his thoughts from all created things to fix them on God alone, will find that God will be faithful to him, and will Himself fill his heart."

She had a marvellous power of putting aside everything except the matter in hand, and if any sister went to speak to her about her difficulties, she entered into them as if she had nothing else to think of. One of them writes: "The greatness of her soul and the nobility of her character were visible in all she did, and impressed those who came in contact with her, even strangers who saw her in the parlour."

Like all those called to found Religious Orders, Mother Connelly had the gift of influencing the hearts of others. Her words possessed great power, and even a passing remark would often make a lasting impression. It was not so much what she said as her own personality and the influence of her union with God that told. For her words, when repeated to others, often sounded trite and ordinary. "Once," relates a child, "I heard her read aloud the words, 'Christ hath loved us with an everlasting love.' Her voice and tone made such an impression upon me that for weeks afterwards those words were constantly in my mind and heart, and I have never forgotten them." On another occasion, when visiting the community at Preston, she gave an instruction to the Children of Mary. Her words went straight to their hearts, and several of them dated the dawn of a religious vocation from that hour.

By precept, as well as by example, she waged war against the littleness of self-occupation, or, as she called it, "twining round self" like woodbine on a stick. "Be full of joy," she said, "despising the pettiness of women, seeking and loving the poverty, suffering and obedience

of our Divine Model." To one who was inclined to worry about herself she wrote :

" Our Lord regards what you desire sincerely to become rather than what you are. Try to help others, and each effort will be blessed on yourself."

If Mother Connelly had reached a high degree of union with God, it is not for a moment pretended that she never committed faults or made mistakes. She was not one of those who show no human frailties. Sometimes, perhaps, she was over-indulgent to her children, at other times she may have been inconsiderate in her demands. There were some who judged her arbitrary in the use of her authority. " The strength and firmness of will with which she cast from her all that might impede her in her duty gave to some the impression that she did not feel," wrote one who knew well how much this stern self-mastery cost her. She certainly erred occasionally, not so much in the broad principles of government, as in their application to particular individuals and circumstances.

Mother Maria Joseph was closely questioned about her by a priest, and she wrote down her answer. Her testimony would have been endorsed by many others.

" I do not doubt that, like everyone else, Mother Connelly has committed faults in the responsible office that she has held for so many years—faults which she would be the first to acknowledge—but I never saw her commit a fault that was wilful. In fact, after having lived with her as my Superior for twenty years, I can say that I never saw anything which was not holy and edifying in her conduct. And if you were appointed after her death to ask what we could testify about her holiness, I should say I never saw anything that would prevent the process of her beatification being commenced. I *have* seen many heroic acts of self-denial, and a uniform

calmness and resignation under the most distressing domestic trials."

Mother Connelly used lovingly to encourage her children to profit by their faults, and to rise above human respect. In the same way when she had erred herself, she made no difficulty about retracing her steps. She would calmly acknowledge her mistake, or ask pardon with perfect simplicity. Personal ambition and vanity had no place in her scheme. For her, sanctity meant the fulfilling of God's will, not mere individual perfection. Thus outward failure brought her no embarrassment or confusion.

She used to tell the sisters to pray for certainty of conscience, a grace which she herself seems to have possessed in a high degree. A sister writes:

"I was surprised at her calmness once when I had repeated to her some very strong statements, which I believed were correct, about something she had done. After listening quietly to all I had to say, she replied: 'Well, my dear, on looking back over the circumstances, I think if they occurred again, I should do just the same.'"

Her refined taste for the beautiful was most valuable to her Society, in which she established a tradition in sacred art. In this she was assisted by Augustus Welby Pugin and his sons, who gave her designs for vestments and church carpets. She attached great importance to the revival of correct ecclesiastical ornament, and in her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament she desired all the adornments of the altar to be as costly and beautiful as possible. She loved the grace and beauty of Nature, the varied sweetness of the flowers, and the mystical stateliness of the liturgy, so she would surround the altar with all these things. Her dislike of frivolity and bad taste was universal. For instance, she was indignant when ugly or vulgar toys were given to children, and she

thought their surroundings ought to be made as attractive as possible. "We must have beautiful class-rooms and dormitories," she insisted.

Though there was nothing masculine about her manner or ways, her judgment was sound and her power of reasoning swift and clear as that of a man. At conferences or council she would clearly state and sum up the arguments for and against a course of action. In maintaining what she considered right, or in defending a principle, she was absolutely fearless. Strangers who came across some instance of her firmness often judged her to be an obstinate and self-opinionated woman. But those who lived with her knew how generous would be the surrender if, after prayer and consideration of the views of others, she came to see the matter in a different light.

She was open to every intellectual and artistic appeal, fond of history, poetry and languages; but her favourite secular study was mathematics. Her mental vigour was remarkable, and she seemed able to grasp easily and rapidly whatever she put her mind to.

A gay delight in life was part of her natural endowment, and all the trials she suffered left this happy gift intact, only adding to it a gentleness and sympathy and a lovely pity for the sorrow of others great or small.

The following extract from a letter written by Mother Connelly to one of her communities, gives so complete a picture of her own exterior that we may add it as a description of herself:

"Dear children in Christ,

"You have begged me to tell you what I most desire to see you grow and excel in. This day being the Feast of the Epiphany, our great Feast of the year, when we renew our Vows, it may perhaps be well for me to comply with your request and give you a little remembrance for the year; but in doing so I need only make

use of the Saints and apply their advice and words to you, far above any I could give you of my own.

" Certainly I most ardently desire to see you closely united to God in prayer, and in all your actions, that the example of each in every virtue may assist and encourage the others, and above all I would wish to see you excel in the perfection of Charity and true Humility; and may you be free from all inordinate affections, subdued and mortified by the grace of God, and so composed and circumspect, especially in speaking, that nothing, not even a single word, may be observed in you that would not tend to the edification of all around you.

" I would also wish you to learn how to interchange severity and firmness with mildness and mercy, so as not to allow yourselves to be turned from what has been determined upon as acceptable to God; and may you have strength of mind to resist the weakness of many, not losing confidence by reason of contradictions, nor suffering yourselves to be drawn by entreaties from that which reason and the service of God demand, not allowing yourselves to be elevated by prosperity nor dejected by adversity, being prepared, were it necessary, to submit even to death for the love and in the service of Our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XIV

THE SCHOOL

1851–1863

Since erudition in women is a new thing and a reproach to the sloth of men, many will gladly assail it, and impute to literature what is really the fault of nature, thinking from the vices of the learned to get their own ignorance esteemed as virtue.—BLESSED THOMAS MORE : *Letter to William Gunnell.*

THE education of girls in England in the first half of the nineteenth century was in many respects in a worse condition than it had been for a long time before or since. Respect for the feminine intellect had been declining for two centuries, and in spite of occasional brilliant exceptions, women were in general regarded as useful or pleasant helpmates to man, without any pretensions to emulate his intellectual achievements.

Protests were raised from time to time by writers, who asserted that women were capable of learning everything that men would allow them to be taught, but these revolts against tyranny were isolated and ineffectual. With the suppression of convents in the sixteenth century many of the ideals of Christian womanhood had disappeared. Marriage alone filled the horizon of mothers and daughters, and the one aim of their education was to enable a girl to shine in a frivolous and unintellectual society and thus secure for herself a husband.

Miss Frances Power Cobbe in her autobiography describes the fashionable boarding school to which she was sent in 1836 :

" Not that which was good in itself, or useful to the community, or even that which would be delightful to

ourselves, but that which would make us admired in society was the *raison d'être* of each requirement. Everything was taught in the inverse ratio of its true importance. At the bottom of the scale were Morals and Religion, and at the top were Music and Dancing, miserably poor music too, of the Italian school then in vogue, and generally performed in a showy and tasteless manner on harp or piano." [1]

Dorothea Beale gives a complementary picture when she tells of the school to which she went about 1842, in which the fashionable accomplishments of young ladies were openly discarded in favour of what was considered to be an intellectual education.

" It was a school," she writes, " considered much above the average for sound instruction. Our mistresses were women who had read and thought; they had taken pains to arrange various schemes of knowledge; yet what miserable teaching we had in many subjects! History was learned by committing to memory little manuals; rules of arithmetic were taught, but the principles were never explained.

" Instead of reading and learning the masterpieces of literature, we repeated week by week the Lamentations of King Hezekiah, the pretty but somewhat weak 'Mother's Picture' of Cowper, and worse, doggerel verses on the solar system." [2]

The ordinary schoolbooks in use were Magnall's *Questions*, Mrs. Trimmer's and Mrs. Markham's *Histories* or *Lingard abridged for Schools*, Murray's *Grammar*, and other manuals or small catechisms in which were collected and served up such fragments of information as were considered suitable to the capacity of the female mind.

[1] Alice Zimmern, *The Renaissance of Girls' Education* (London, 1898), p. 15.
[2] E. Raikes, *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham* (London, 1908), p. 9.

Of course there was among thoughtful men and women a growing distaste for such superficiality. Efforts at improvement were being made in various directions. The foundation of Queen's College, Harley Street, in March 1848 for the purpose of educating women who wished to take up the profession of teaching, was an event of permanent importance, and the College became a seed-plot of modern educational ideas, but in 1846 that time was not yet.

The question for Catholics assumed a different aspect. Catholics did not seek admission into Protestant schools of the type we have described, nor would it probably have been granted to them had they done so. Indeed higher education had unfortunately come to be regarded by a section of Catholics as synonymous with worldliness. Catholic education of any kind had been carried on under serious difficulties since the Reformation, and Catholic schools had been illegal until the Relief Act of 1791. Before that date convent schools had been banished from England for nearly two centuries. Catholic children had either received at home such instruction as their parents had been able to give them, or had been sent abroad at the risk of severe penalties, to be educated by religious in Belgium, France, Italy or Spain. By 1846 there were several good Catholic schools for boys. St. Edmund's College and Downside in the south, Ushaw and Stonyhurst in the north, were due to the advent of priests and religious who had fled from the terrors of the French Revolution. Oscott had been founded in 1793 by an association of English Catholics for the training of their sons and clergy, and owed its prosperity to the energetic government of Dr. Milner.

The provision for girls still left much to be desired. The number of convent schools in England in 1846 was small, and most of the religious who taught in them were enclosed. The old contemplative Orders had, during the times of persecution, done good work for the Church

by educating children in the retirement of the cloister. The scholars wore a semi-religious uniform and attended the Divine Office and other community exercises. There was no going home for the holidays, and the world outside was never mentioned. Looking-glasses were prohibited, and, in some cases, even the bath was considered a remnant of pagan luxury. The very conditions of their Rule, which protected these good religious from all contact with the world, made it impossible for them to understand or meet the requirements of rapidly changing times.

Besides this, their customs, traditions and educational ideas were foreign. The children were brought up in an atmosphere which was essentially un-English, and this tended to form yet another barrier later on between them and other girls. The same thing happened if children were sent abroad. There was no preparation for home or social life in England, and in many instances the pupils either entered religious Orders abroad, or married foreigners, and thus failed in any way to better the condition of Catholics in their own country.

Already attempts had been made to improve the situation by inviting to England colonies of religious of modern French educational Orders. But most Catholics would have preferred to entrust their daughters to English nuns had this been possible.

There were other difficulties. Centuries of persecution of imprisonment and fines had impoverished the old Catholic families, so that after as good an education as possible had been provided for the sons, there was but little money left to expend on the schooling of daughters. The standard of Catholic education in secular subjects fell even below that of the Protestant schools, which, as we have seen, were themselves at a low ebb.

This very inadequate sketch illustrates a few of the difficulties with which Mother Connelly had to contend when she accepted the task of reforming the education

of Catholic girls in England. From 1848 to 1863, though burdened with responsibilities and tried by continual opposition, she was building up with insight and power the educational system of the Society. The whole of her career with its varied experience had been a preparation for this work, and now her gifts of mind found ample scope.

Her outlook was essentially modern and her views spacious. She believed in a liberal rather than in a specialised curriculum for girls—that they should have a general acquaintance with all the chief branches of knowledge which have interested and occupied mankind. Besides the ordinary school subjects she provided lectures on philosophy, geology, art, architecture and even heraldry. Music, drawing, painting and needlework found a place in her scheme, and many of the VI form girls read the Gospel of St. John in Greek before they left school. There was more time in those days, for holidays were short, and the children went home only once a year for four or five weeks.

Excursions into the country, charades, the acting of plays and other games supplied healthy and sufficient amusement for the simpler tastes of that time, and taught the children that all-important art—the profitable employment of leisure. School-life resembled the old-fashioned home-life far more than is possible now. There was more stability too. Children came to school quite young and remained till they were eighteen or nineteen. In their lessons there was not the necessity for constant revision and the cutting up of work which public examinations often entail, and they were spared the excitement and nervous tension inseparable from these.

Rules for the use of those teaching in the school, and hints on methods were from time to time written down by Mother Connelly. By degrees this led to the idea of a summary which should embody the educational system of the Society. In 1863 a code of regulations for the school

work was printed, to which were added syllabuses, outlines of method, lists of books, schemes of marks, time-tables, etc.

Mother Connelly wrote in the Preface:

"We have before us the Book of Studies, which is simply the same sort of guide as a chart is to the traveller. We must use it in the same way to assist us in the sweetly laborious duty of education.

"Though we so well know that great things are achieved only by untiring labour and suffering, we sometimes forget that in training and teaching children it is absolutely necessary to walk step by step, to teach line by line, to practise virtue little by little, in act after act, and only by such acts of virtue as are suited to the age and stage of moral and intellectual development of those we are guiding."

The organisation of the school in grades and classes, and many of the general rules of discipline, were extracted from the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits, from which Mother Connelly borrowed the name and plan of her book.[1] The methods of teaching, when not original, were adapted from the best available text-books.

To quote from a short sketch of her work already published:[2]

"Many of the principles which she formulated are regarded to-day as quite modern discoveries in the art of education. Such are, for instance, the entrusting of much of the responsibility for the maintenance of order to children elected by the votes of their companions;

[1] Suitable alterations adapt the regulation to "young ladies." The Jesuit scholars are forbidden to bring "swords or weapons" to college, the St. Leonards pupils to introduce "pet animals." The former are warned against "swearing," the latter against "unladylike expressions."

[2] *The Society of the Holy Child Jesus*, Catholic Truth Society, Pamphlet H. 124.

the careful grading and correlation of work in each subject; the intervals of rest and recreation between the lessons; the special attention bestowed on the instruction of the youngest children; the imaginative appeal in the teaching of the humanistic subjects; the high value set on drawing as a means of self-expression; the utilisation of the dramatic instinct; and the liberal use made of encouragement and praise as incentives to effort."

All the difficult work was allotted to the morning hours, while drawing, painting, needlework and modern languages supplied lighter occupation for the afternoon. Five minutes' interval for rest and recreation were allowed between the lessons. The work in each subject was carefully graded, and the mistresses were warned against requiring too much. "The lessons to be learnt must not be too long, nor beyond the capacity of the pupils." "Explanation of every lesson to be learnt is to be given fully before the memory is taxed. Let the mistresses in all their lessons and explanations go repeatedly over the same ground, always making use of the Blackboard, that the memory may be assisted by the eye. The explanation should be given in a clear, concise manner, and should be made as amusing and interesting as possible."

A detailed course of study in each school subject is then given, together with suggestions on the method of teaching and books to be used at each stage.

The study of Literature was very thorough, and was not confined to English authors or to modern times. In the work of the highest classes a philosophic trend is noticeable. The girls are to be led "to enter into the meaning of Literature," noting "its connection with languages and races, and the development of the faculties of the mind; showing how the nations who excel in one faculty excel in a corresponding branch of literature." The lectures of Cardinal Wiseman are suggested for use in this subject.

Geography was taught in such a way as to kindle imagination and provoke interest and thought. The human element was kept prominent. The children were first led to notice the occupations of the people around them, then to turn their thoughts to the appearance, dress and occupations of the people of other countries. Clear and vivid descriptions were aimed at by the mistresses and constant appeal made to the imagination. The class were led to study the physical features of their own neighbourhood, and so to picture the scenery of other lands, and were aided as much as possible by pictorial and oral illustration. They were taught to understand maps by drawing plans of their own classroom, etc.

History began with stories and biographies—always comparing the past with the present, and making use of the present to illustrate the past. Maps and pictures figured largely in the lessons. Some idea of the literature of the period, with its expression of the popular mind, and of the art and architecture was given; " all these helping to throw light upon the national characteristics of the period."

Original Composition was highly valued as an intellectual test by Mother Connelly, and she herself would sometimes set the subjects to be treated, telling the elder girls to write for her inspection a description, a criticism or an allegory. The special interest she took in their " essays " led to keen competition, and some good work was done. Mother Connelly would tell the children that the arts of reading aloud and of letter-writing were of the first importance for them, and that a girl who could not read intelligently a leading article from *The Times*, or express her mind clearly in a letter, had no claim to be considered educated.

French, " Church Latin," Italian, German, vocal and instrumental music were taught, but on methods which call for no special remark. The drawing Mother Connelly

kept under her own supervision, and an exceptionally high standard was reached.

We read in the *Book of Studies* :

" In our schools we are not to consider drawing as an extra or superlative art, left to the choice of any one to follow or leave out, but on the contrary, as a Christian Art, and one of the most important branches of education, second only to the art of speaking and writing, and in some respects even beyond the languages, as it is in itself a universal language, addressing itself to the ignorant, as well as to the most refined. . . . Nor is it to be considered as an accomplishment, but as an art, which has its philosophy as well as its poetry. . . . For the poetry of art we must provide various occasions to allow every grade in the school to cultivate their fancy and taste on all the holidays of the year, by allowing them to have outlines of animals, birds, plants, landscapes, etc., not as a lesson, but as an amusement."

Art needlework was cultivated in the higher classes. Only " the best models in decorative art in the mediæval style were to be used, and nothing was to be done that would not bear criticism in an artistic sense." The children were allowed to do " tapestry work, and silk and gold embroidery," only after they had gone through a graduated course of plain sewing. This occupation left their minds comparatively free, so that the *Book of Studies* suggests thoughts that may sanctify the work on which the children were engaged for the service of the altar. The Mistress is exhorted to—" apply her whole heart to fulfilling her duty towards the children, teaching them how to offer each stitch to the Holy Child Jesus, and to weave golden garments of love to cover His tender limbs; and again at another time to form a crown of golden love to repair the pain and sufferings of the Crown of Thorns; and again, another day, offering each stitch done in the most perfect manner possible, for the relief of the

souls in purgatory, or for the intentions of the Superior, etc., in short, she should form some definite object and purpose of charity for the hour of work."

But it was in the quiet half-hour before supper, when the work of the day was nearly over, and the children had made their evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament, that the most important part of their education took place. Of this lesson Mother Connelly wrote: "They must be made to feel the difference existing between religious instruction and other lessons."

"The first lessons should be given in the form of simple tales, to excite their curiosity and arouse their imaginations, placing Almighty God before them in the light of a tender and loving Father, a kind and good Creator, Who has made us all and created everything, who has bestowed upon us all we possess—thus leading their young hearts to a sincere love of His goodness. (They should not yet be taught to look upon God in the exercise of His power as a judge or punisher of sin.)"

After a tender love of God has taken possession of their hearts, through the stories of the life of Christ especially, they will be ready to hear of sin and its punishment, for they will now understand better the evil of offending One who has done so much for us.

Later on there are useful hints on the method of treating parables, and other parts of the Gospels. First the story should be taken literally, with remarks on the geography of the scene, or on the manners and customs to which allusion is made. This part of the lesson should "be clear and graphic, so as to impress the pupils' imagination." Afterwards the interpretation or spiritual meaning of the passage should be taken, but in such a manner as not to "overstrain the analogy" or distort the spiritual truth conveyed.

Church History was taught throughout the school. The little ones, at the age of seven and younger, were familiar with the catacombs, the amphitheatre and the

early martyrs, through the stories they had heard and the plays and tableaux in which they took part.

With some points of the St. Leonards system of 1863 modern opinion would not be in agreement. There was more memory work than would now be generally approved. A good deal of time was spent in making "fair copies" of corrected compositions, which were decorated with elaborate maps and heraldic devices, and afterwards taken home. Dictation was much in vogue, and the school work was necessarily hampered by the poor quality of the text-books available.

But Mother Connelly put freshness, life and vigour into everything. Always she aimed at avoiding fatigue and tedium—at keeping up the high spirits and joyous activity natural to healthy children. In this she was not merely actuated by the interest she took in their mental and physical development. It was one of her maxims that happiness makes for goodness—that children become troublesome or rebellious because they are mismanaged, or their duty is made too irksome. Without eliminating hard work, Mother Connelly prevented it from becoming drudgery. She created around her a happy, genial atmosphere, and made school life so interesting that temptations to indolence and disobedience in great part disappeared.

One point on which she encountered a good deal of opposition, but on which she insisted as of special value in education, was the acting of plays by the children. Catholic parents were at that time intensely afraid of "worldliness," and were sometimes incapable of distinguishing it from refinement, and culture. Consequently they became alarmed. But the Foundress realised that though the children's moral and intellectual training came first, Catholic girls must also be taught to take their place in society. She believed that in acting they acquired grace of deportment and speech, and lost any undesirable awkwardness. Besides, the preparation of

the plays gave interesting and healthy occupation for their minds in days when there were very few games for girls. "The living book of practical training," she wrote, "is even more important than the printed course of books." She thought children imbibed noble sentiments from taking the parts of noble characters, and incidentally learned many useful arts from making the dresses and scenery. It was long before some even of the sisters could overcome their prejudice against this form of amusement, and an account of a discussion on the subject is noted in the school journal by Mother Connelly. She writes:

"The opinion of some of the sisters is that the children are disimproved rather than improved by acting in plays. That these foster vanity, love of dress, jealousy, etc., and that in acting the parts of subordinate characters they make their conduct and sentiments their own."

Mother Connelly urged in reply that vanity and other faults were not created, but only brought to light, by the plays. That it was a good thing for the children to show their faults and weaknesses at a time when correction was possible, and when there was the minimum of danger. They would thus be prepared to encounter the more serious temptations of the world. It was decided that time should be taken to watch more carefully the result of the plays upon different characters before coming to a decision. Later, it was agreed that they helped the children to understand their own characters better, and to accept correction with simplicity and good humour.

One of the sisters writes:

"I well remember the patience with which Mother Connelly instructed the little actresses of our first grand play—*Comus*—and how she made them suit their actions to the words. Then she herself devised and worked the most elaborate dresses, and herself dressed little Sabrina

as a water nymph, and painted the river scene with her own hands with the help of the sisters.

" This will show how she was the soul of our education, for what she did in one subject she continued in every branch till it arrived at sufficient perfection to be able to stand alone. . . .

" She thought the Plays would not only cultivate taste, but improve the moral courage of the children. And certainly the public spirit of our little actors and their desire to do well for the credit of the school were proof that Mother Connelly was right in her anticipations. ' The Holy Child Theatre,' she called it, and I believe that she considered that every performance was an act of love to Him. . . . She used to say she did not know what was meant by ' human interest,' for if everything was done for God, every act was an act of worship and religion. There was to be nothing merely natural. Everything might be made supernatural by purity of intention."

There is no doubt that these " innovations " prevented the rapid progress of the school in its first years, and Mother Connelly had to sacrifice immediate prosperity to what she considered the true interests of education. The label " worldly " was affixed to the school, and stuck for many years. Till 1856 there were never more than sixteen resident pupils in the school. After that the numbers increased steadily, and the Catholic families rallied round her. But it was not till 1863 that the number rose to fifty. Perhaps the marvel is that with her strange history and unusual procedure she was able to build up a school at all. But her methods forced admiration from all who were able to divest themselves of prejudice. They were even more successful at first in the elementary schools than in the boarding-schools, and she was just as much interested in the suitable education of the poor children as in that of the more wealthy classes, though here, of course, there was not the same scope for variety.

The following report was published by the Poor School Committee in 1853 :

" St. Leonards-on-Sea : 105 Girls.

" Building excellent. Desks excellent. Furniture excellent. Playground excellent. Books abundant and good. Apparatus abundant. Organisation excellent. Methods mixed, and applied with rare skill and judgment. Discipline excellent. Instruction of the highest order.

" It is impossible to witness without admiration the results obtained in this very interesting school, in which consummate skill in the art of teaching, unwearied patience, and the most persuasive personal influence, have combined to accomplish all the rarest fruits of Christian instruction. The school is now one of the most perfect institutions of its class in Europe."

CHAPTER XV

THE SCHOOL (*continued*)

You cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does—she will wither without sun; she will decay in her sheath, as a narcissus will, if you do not give her air enough; she may fall and defile her head in dust, if you leave her without help at some moments of her life; but you cannot fetter her.—RUSKIN: *Sesame and Lilies.*

WITH regard to Mother Connelly's principles of school discipline, we quote again:[1]

"In establishing the discipline of the schools Mother Connelly laid great stress upon two points which deserve special mention, because they have always remained distinctive features in the educational system of the Society. First, she bestowed upon the children a measure of freedom very unusual in those days, though almost universally approved by modern opinion. She considered it of the first importance that children should freely display their characters, in order that their faults might become apparent and be corrected. Where the school discipline imposes too rigid a decorum this end is not attained. Children who have not been accustomed to judge and act for themselves never learn to know their weak points, or how to deal with them. They may acquire a pleasing and orderly exterior, but within the character remains undeveloped and initiative dies away.

"The second principle on which Mother Connelly insisted, and which became a tradition in the Society, was the necessity of trusting children. Children respond

[1] *The Society of the Holy Child Jesus*, Catholic Truth Society, Pamphlet H. 124.

to confidence as flowers to the sunlight, and its happy influence brings out and strengthens all that is best within them. Where care is taken to develop in their minds a sense of honour and high principle this confidence will rarely be misplaced. While, therefore, a proper supervision was always to be exercised, it was never to degenerate into such minute surveillance as might tend to lessen in the children the sense of personal responsibility for their own actions, and even a sense of corporate responsibility for the good conduct and fair fame of the school. Each child was to feel that she was thoroughly trusted by her mistresses, and was therefore bound to act up to that trust. In this spirit the children were trained to report their own breaches of discipline; and it has always been regarded as a maxim among them that conduct ought to be better in the absence of the mistresses than even in their presence.

" Under such training the law of conscience becomes paramount, and a permanent basis of principle is developed which is not likely to be discarded later with the school uniform."

It may be of interest to note that Mother Connelly did not require the children to be dressed in dowdy or sombre garments, but encouraged, with a view to their future, a reasonable attention to dress and appearance. A bright blue frock was worn at first, later, crimson was chosen, and at another time the uniform was a silver grey dress trimmed with velvet.

Thus, with energy, enterprise and resourcefulness, Mother Connelly devoted herself to the task of Christian education. The increasing responsibilities of her position as Superior General gradually withdrew her from active work in the school—but in the first years the children felt and delighted in her vivid personality. A few extracts from reminiscences supplied by old pupils will give some insight into her " gracious ways " with them.

Miss Mary H. Allies, daughter of the well-known author, and herself an author, writes :

" The school was growing up with the Society itself, and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, when I arrived at the Convent in 1859, was in the days when the Mother is all-powerful, does everything and looks into everything herself. Whilst Reverend Mother was building up her dynasty, we enjoyed the delights of real monarchy. From the first I felt the impress of that compelling personality. She began at once to be queen and mother to me."

Evidently Mrs. Allies had betrayed some fear of sending the children to school in a convent lest they should become nuns, for the recollections continue :

" In a letter to my father before my arrival she had written ' Pray tell Mrs. Allies that I have no " nunnish plots " for your dear little ones. You know it is usually remarked that children who come to a convent very young seldom end in gaining a religious vocation. . . . Let our dear Lord take His own sweet care of those innocents and be quite sure that I mean what I say when I tell you to send them to us whenever you wish.'

" Then when one innocent (of seven) had arrived, she told my father : ' Your darling Mary is winning all hearts. She had an overwhelming flood of tears when apparently thinking of home yesterday, though she only half acknowledged the cause, but very stoutly denied that anybody or anything at St. Leonards made her cry. Whereupon a letter to her darling Mama was proposed, and sunshine soon returned. I have not yet heard whether the epistle is completed, but she is very bright and sunny.' "

And again later :

" Your two darling children are quite well and good. And they have everything to make them enjoy their sunny, sinless childhood."

At the age of fifteen the elder was seized with a severe illness. She continues :

" I was promised an early death, and Reverend Mother's letter—the last I received from her—strengthened me in my hope of leaving this world. She wrote (February 12th, 1868):

" ' My sweetest Mary,

" ' What a joy it would have been to us if your dear little face had presented itself on Frances' arrival ! Our dear Lord did not send us such a favour, therefore we must satisfy ourselves by hearing of you only, and sending you a few lines just to say that we love you very tenderly, and pray for you in all our prayers, and in our thoughts. You know Our Lord accepts our thoughts as prayers when we desire earnestly anything good and for His greater glory. And He accepts our tears too when they are good tears, like Our Lady's, even though we may not have the thought just at the time they are flowing. I suppose they would then come under actions, and very fast actions too when they roll very plentifully and unbidden. (Morning offering : " Thoughts, words and deeds.")

" ' My sweetest darling, what a happy hope you have of going to heaven without many of the trials of this weary world ! Do you remember reading *Easter in Heaven*, or was it after you left here that we had it? It is a beautiful picture of our future home.

" ' I often think of your dear companions, Mary de Lisle and May Corry, and of how they stole Heaven before us. Ask them sometimes to pray for us in the midst of toil and trial while they have been chosen before us !

" ' Good-bye darling. All send their dearest love with mine.

" ' Ever yours in the heart of Jesus,

" ' Cornelia Connelly.' " [1]

[1] Mother Connelly poured out all her affection for the child she thought was dying. But the doctor's opinion proved incorrect. The above reminiscences were written by Miss Mary Allies in 1921.

The following recollections were contributed by Catherine Harper, one of the early pupils at St. Leonards, and afterwards a Sister of Charity :

" My early childhood, from 1855, and the subsequent fourteen years of my life were passed under the care of dear Mother Connelly and her nuns. At the mention of Reverend Mother's name, her sweet face rises before me, with that look of loving reproof which I so often saw upon it—for I was a tiresome, wilful child, and had been greatly spoiled by my dear father. He was an Anglican clergyman and became a Catholic during the Oxford Movement, thus losing his means of livelihood. For this reason Reverend Mother undertook to educate me free of charge, and I was placed in the convent at the age of six. How Reverend Mother must smile in Heaven when she sees her troublesome pupil transformed into a happy daughter of St. Vincent de Paul ! I remember when I was preparing for my First Communion she sent for me, and after speaking earnestly of the greatness of the event, she asked me what I thought about my future life. I said I had never thought about it, but I hoped to be married. She smiled and inquired if I had any one in view. ' No,' said I, ' but I want him to be Edward by name.' ' Oh ! ' said Reverend Mother, laughing. ' Well, you must pray that God's will may be done in you, and you must tell Him that you will always do what He wishes.' I agreed to this with some reluctance. When I had received Our Lord, my promise tormented me, as I was so much afraid He might wish me to be a nun. But I had promised, so I prayed as Reverend Mother had told me, and then added quickly, ' Dear Lord, grant that you will never wish me to be a nun, for I don't want to be one.' [1]

" Although Reverend Mother's words had impressed

[1] Sister Harper used to say afterwards that Our Lord had managed to grant this prayer, and yet keep her for Himself, for the Sisters of Charity are not nuns.

me, I was far from understanding the lesson she meant to convey. But she had great sympathy for children, and did not try to force upon them wisdom beyond their years. We all loved her and thought her very holy, and would consider ourselves honoured by a smile and a few words from her. Often I came in for rebukes for bad behaviour, and at these times she could be very stern. But the general atmosphere of St. Leonards was one of joy and contentment. There was no spying on the part of the nuns, but we were greatly trusted, and trained to a high sense of honour—a method that completely achieved its end. There was a sense of freedom and broad-mindedness about the school that was delightful. Our lives were made happy by numerous little treats and customs on different occasions, to which we looked forward eagerly. On Holy Innocents' Day we dressed up as nuns—and the best part of this was that we were allowed to go all over the convent and mix with the nuns. On another Feast day we had to hunt for our breakfast, which was hidden somewhere in the grounds. At other times we had long walks or picnics, which were pure joy.

"With all this gaiety and fun there was mingled a most attractive spirit of piety. Our dear Lord and His Mother our Guardian Angels and the Saints were mixed up with our daily life in a happy, loving spirit, which never made devotion tedious or distasteful. We were supplied with motives which raised our obedience to the school regulations on to a high plane. I have never forgotten how we were taught to keep silence as we went two by two to the chapel, so that we might be asking our Angel Guardians to prepare our hearts to appear before Our Lord. Again, we were taught to rise promptly in the morning by being reminded that our good Angel was waiting for this first act that he might present it as a morning gift to Our Lord.

"Reverend Mother loved the liturgy of the Church, and had the gift of spreading this love among us. We

were taught to sing Vespers, and every Saturday we all assembled with our Missal and Vesper book to find and mark the places for the next day, the elder girls helping the younger ones.

"As I grew older, and began to reflect upon all that I saw, I was struck with the religious spirit among the nuns. They were so unworldly although their duties brought them much into contact with the world, and after more than sixty years they still stand out in my mind as examples of simplicity, generosity and kindness. Reverend Mother had a very masterful character and a wonderful love of God and great power over others. I thought she showed great good sense in educational matters. She seemed able to imbue all the nuns with her own zeal and large-mindedness. Her voice was rather stern and very determined, though her manner was gentle and winning and her face beautiful. We used to go down to the hall on Feast-days to wish her a happy Feast, and she would speak a few holy, motherly words to us, telling us how we should draw practical help for our own lives from the mystery we were celebrating. She would generally end up playfully, and tell us to run away and enjoy ourselves."

Sometimes in the first years at St. Leonards she would walk through the dormitory with another sister after the children were in bed, and, standing by each child for a few moments, give her blessing, making a little cross on the child's forehead. This had been her custom with her own children long ago. One of the nuns, watching her, once ventured to ask her if the sight of these children did not remind her of her own little ones. She replied gently: "The thought of my children never leaves me." It was always noticed that she showed a special care and tenderness for motherless children.

She was above all things a mother, and her influence over little children was specially marked. An onlooker relates an instance:

Lady Agnes and Lady Agatha Tollemache were brought to St. Leonards when they were mere babies of four and two. Probably, like many little children, they were frightened by the black dresses of the nuns. No one could entice a word from them, and they stood beside the door, defiant and solemn, with their little faces expressing all the wrath and misery of which a child is capable. Then Mother Connelly arrived. She sat down quietly and lifted the younger child on to her lap. The little one looked up astonished, but when she saw the sweet, motherly face above her, a change came over her own. She gazed solemnly, while the frown gradually disappeared, giving place to a trustful smile. She laid her face on Mother Connelly's shoulder and nestled into her arms. The elder sister followed suit. Without a word the victory was won.

" The virtue of justice was very noticeable in Reverend Mother," wrote one of her children, and in the reminiscences sent by old St. Leonards pupils it is striking how frequently her justice is mentioned. Another wrote, " Reverend Mother was very firm, but so just, and always motherly and kind. We fell in with her wishes, not through fear, but through love for her, and we all felt she was just towards us. We could trust her. She was ever more ready to encourage than to blame."

One " Old Girl " notes that Reverend Mother's kindest words at Prize Day and other Exhibitions were generally for the less brilliant pupils who had failed to attain distinction; and another remembers how carefully and patiently she looked through the children's exercise books presented for her inspection, " turning over to the very last page."

The following incident has also been gratefully treasured up for many years. It was Reverend Mother's Feast day, and for weeks the children had been working so as to present her with what they knew she would like best—

clothes to give to the poor. One little girl of seven years had been eager to do her part. She had tried hard, and with infinite labour had concocted a dreadful garment made of strips of flannel joined together by countless rows of herringbone. She was feeling anxious and frightened, for the big girls had made such fun of her masterpiece, and it certainly looked foolish beside their piles of neat handiwork. When her turn came to go up to Reverend Mother she went with flushed cheeks and hanging head. Mother Connelly took the piece of work from her, examined it carefully and looked as pleased as if it had been some magnificent embroidery. "Did you make this all yourself, dear?" she asked, and then taking the little hot face between her two hands she gave her a big motherly embrace. She seemed to understand the feelings of children and to be able to dispel their troubles with a word.

Her influence was always vigorous and bracing. Once, after a picnic, a sister went to Reverend Mother and asked whether all the children might have a long rest in the morning, as they seemed very tired. "Long rest!" said Mother Connelly, "till when?" "Till breakfast," answered the sister. "And miss Mass for enjoyment? What about the balls and the parties and the theatres when they leave us? Will they get up for daily Mass, or are they to remember rests after picnics at St. Leonards? . . . No child should have been taken to so tiring a picnic who is too delicate to get up to-morrow for Mass. If there is such a child, let her rest all day." Holy Mass, the morning after a holiday, became a tradition in the school.

She would warn the nuns against allowing the children to become too much attached to them, and would enlarge on the evils of ill-regulated affections. "Be careful not to steal their young hearts from Our Lord," she would say. "We have to learn to make strong women, who, while they lose nothing of their gentleness and sweetness, should yet have a masculine force of character and will." And again: "It is a good thing for the children to love you,

but their love must not remain with you. You must lift it up to God. How sorry you would be if you discovered that you had stolen a single loving thought away from Him. If you are dead to yourselves and united to Our Lord, He will enlighten you and direct you in all your duties towards the children."

Mother Connelly's moral training was a spirit rather than a system—firmly rooted in unchanging principles, yet varied in application and elastic in detail. There were, of course, occasional failures—though on the whole her method was and is successful. Many things have altered since the days when she was the life and inspiration of the school at St. Leonards. This is what she herself would have wished. She knew that education must be dynamic—in vital contact with contemporary social life. So she took care to insert in the Rule of the Society that in educational matters the nuns were bound to " meet the wants of the age, while leading their children to true piety and solid virtue." Yet her spirit remains unchanged. Not only at St. Leonards, but in all the schools of the Society, it still teaches Holy Child girls to honour simplicity, truth and kindness, to be ready for self-sacrifice, to love holiness and to keep a cheerful heart in the midst of trials.

It was during the years 1863–1873 that Mother Connelly's work reached its zenith of external activity. The fame of the education at St. Leonards was widely spread and the numbers in the school were always increasing.

When a short time before his death Cardinal Wiseman visited St. Leonards and found himself surrounded by the children of all his best friends among the old Catholics, as well as by the children of many prominent converts, he was almost overpowered with emotion. He had not been mistaken when, twenty years before, he had singled out Cornelia Connelly to do this work. " Reverend Mother," he said, " you have realised the desire of my heart."

From the elementary schools in London, Preston, Blackpool came encouraging reports of progress—all of them insisting repeatedly on Mother Connelly's own hallmark—"accuracy." This word occurs constantly in her instructions to the sisters engaged in the schools. "Be accurate," she impressed upon them, "in all you teach, in all you say, in all you do." From various schools and different inspectors reports came in to her. "Attainments uniformly sound and accurate." "Elementary work excellent as a whole, in respect both of accuracy and neatness." "The whole of the work from 1st to 7th standard is of extraordinary excellence in point both of accuracy and intelligence."

Sometimes came news of failure—not altogether unwelcome to the Superior, who feared for her children the result of uninterrupted success. On one such occasion she wrote:

"My very dear Sisters Professed,

"I enclose you Mr. Allies' letter, together with the list from Government. No first class of first year!!! Wonders will never cease! And S.L. second class!! We must not stop to weep over such results, but make up our minds to work quite as hard (but not harder) for the coming year.

"Let us . . . be just as glad in adversity as in prosperity. Adversity is the best for us, and the most conducive to humility, therefore let us be particularly glad, not for any failure, but for the sweet humility of the Holy Child Jesus lent to us. . . ."

One failure did, however, cause great sorrow to the Foundress. It was that of a Government Training School which had been established at St. Leonards in 1856. After some years of successful work, mistakes in administration were made, and Mother Connelly thought it advisable to close this school in 1863. Its buildings

were then utilised for a "middle school," which was christened St. Michael's. This was worked on the same lines as the Holy Child school, but the pension was lowered to meet the needs of less wealthy parents. After the death of Mother Connelly space was urgently needed for the juniors of the Holy Child school. Other schools of the type of St. Michael's had by then become plentiful, and this one was reluctantly dispersed.

The following Preface, written by Mother Connelly, to a book of meditations may serve to show how she endeavoured to train her children in loving devotion to and imitation of the Holy Child Jesus :

"In giving into your hands, my dear children, these short meditations, as a preparation for the solemn and important Feast of Pentecost, I think it will not be amiss to say a few words to you about meditation in general, and as they are to be really very few, I hope you will give them a patient attention.

"I dare say you have been accustomed to think that meditation is something very grand, which is only intended for saints and religious persons and priests to practise. You must put this idea quite away, and try to understand now what it is to meditate.

"It is to use the three powers of our soul upon some truth or mystery of faith, so as to see more in it, and draw more out of it than we can see and do by just reading it over, and then to apply it to ourselves. . . .

"For, my dear children, it will be of no use for you to learn a great many things, and to like to hear stories about the saints and holy things, unless you practise what they practised and what made them holy.

"You must take for your pattern the Holy Child Jesus, not only to love Him and His Blessed Mother, but to imitate Him as He lived with her in the house of Nazareth. You must follow Him as He worked with St. Joseph, as He went upon His many and troublesome errands, and as

He helped His Blessed Mother in her household labours. You must learn, then, how He looked, how He acted, and how He prayed.

" May you really so learn of the Holy Child Jesus, my dear children, growing as He grew, in stature and grace; and when you grow up, may you so love and follow the Man Jesus that you may be of the number of those ' little ones ' whom this most Blessed Lord will bring into His everlasting kingdom ! "

CHAPTER XVI

EXPANSION

1862–1868

Now then, dearly beloved brother, be of good courage, and boldly fulfil the work of the Lord which you have in hand, so as to justify us and to save the souls of many. Let not your tongue cease to preach, nor your hand to work, nor your foot to visit your flock. Give alms abundantly and raise up everywhere the holy Church of God.—*Letter of St. Dunstan to Bishop Wulfsine.*

The year 1862 brought new and important developments in the history of the Society through the instrumentality of Louisa Catherine Duchess of Leeds, who must be reckoned among its chief benefactors in temporal matters. She became acquainted with Mother Connelly in the winter of 1860. For many years she had felt an attraction towards the Foundress, both on account of their common nationality, for she was an American by birth, and also because her sympathies had been aroused by hearing Mother Connelly's strange history discussed.

The life of the Duchess had also been eventful. She was the granddaughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the last survivor of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence. He had been a staunch Catholic and an indefatigable worker for the good of his country. One of his daughters married Richard Caton and became the mother of three beautiful girls, Louisa, Marianne and Elizabeth. They were distinguished for their wealth as well as for their beauty, and when they came to Europe

with their mother in 1825 they were welcomed in courts and palaces. In England they were called the "Three Graces" and were reckoned among the greatest beauties of the early Victorian era. They all married English peers, Louisa became by a second marriage Duchess of Leeds; her sisters married the Marquis of Wellesley and Lord Stafford.

The Duchess, now a widow without children, came to St. Leonards with her invalid sister, Lady Stafford, to obtain the benefit of the sea air. She took an early opportunity of calling at the convent and was greatly impressed by the sanctity of the Superior.

When Lady Stafford died in October 1862, the Duchess's last link with the world was broken, and she arranged to make her home in the convent at St. Leonards.

She soon asked to be received into the Society as a postulant. Mother Connelly refused this, telling her that she would never be able to support the hard life of a religious. The Duchess resolved to convince her of the contrary, and for months she rose at the same hour as the community and led an austere life. Finding Mother Connelly inflexible on the point, however, she relaxed in her more rigid practices after a time and began to content herself with a life of good works within the convent. It was here that she met Mother Connelly's niece, Miss Duval, who was staying for a time at St. Leonards in 1861.

This lady introduced the subject of a foundation of the Society in the United States, and it was at once taken up with great ardour by the Duchess.

Fifteen years had now passed since the beginning of the work at Derby. They had resulted in the consolidation of the Society, and had given it a firm footing in England. But Mother Connelly was an American. Though the scene of her life's activity had been placed by Providence in a strange country, her aspirations could never be satisfied until her children should have crossed the

Atlantic and spread the Society in the United States. The words of Pope Gregory XVI were always sounding in her heart as a prophecy and as a command: "From England let your efforts in the cause of education reach America."

The Duchess now offered her a gift of 150 acres at Towanda in Pennsylvania for the foundation of a convent and school. Mother Connelly would have sent sisters at once, but the Civil War breaking out at that time, the Bishop judged it more prudent for them to wait. Mother Connelly wrote to him:

"My Lord Bishop,

"Your present determination is quite what we might have expected; but, at the same time, we are filled with apprehensions the most sad at hearing your fears for the state of the country. It seems almost impossible to realise this sudden change from prosperity to utter ruin. . . . We shall pray more than ever that our Mother Immaculate may make her seat in the very centre of the land and bring 'peace on earth to men of good will.' We shall say our Rosary of the Dolours especially for your intentions daily. We give up all intention of going to America until the war is over, and then we shall hope that we may labour in your diocese with every prospect of good to souls, and an increase of faith in the neighbourhood that may be most agreeable to you. . . . The existing feeling is that I, being an American, and having devoted myself to the works of our vocation in England, America ought to be the desire of our hearts before any other place out of England. The Bishop of Melbourne has asked us to send out a colony to Australia, which now they fear may be first."

In reply to Mother Connelly's inquiries, the agent of the Duchess of Leeds in Towanda wrote describing the property.

" *Towanda,*
" *Bradford County,*
" *Pennsylvania.*
" *October 3rd,* 1861.

" THE LADY SUPERIOR,
" ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.
" MUCH RESPECTED MADAM,

" Your favour of the 12th ult. has just reached me, and I lose not a moment in reply. The property, which at Her Grace of Leeds expressing a desire to establish a school or convent here I secured and reserved for her, is a frame or wood mansion like most of our New England farm-houses of the larger class. It is two stories high above the cellar or basement rooms, and has in all some 12 to 15 rooms. It has been painted, and there are shutters to the windows. The rooms are mostly plastered, and some of them are papered. Attached, are wood sheds and various out-buildings, one of which is some 40 by 30 feet square, upon the ground, wholly unfinished inside, which might possibly be converted into a schoolroom with dormitories over it. All the buildings would, of course, require more or less transformation and repairs. There are a number of fruit-bearing trees, graperies, etc., rose bushes, flowers, etc., which have been much neglected of late, but could at once be reclaimed.

" I enclose something like a sketch of its location in reference to the town and the Catholic Church; being a few hundred yards distant from the latter, and immediately on the outskirts of the former. The number of acres can be three or five as Her Grace may desire. . . .

" I should think (in reply to another inquiry of yours) there are 1000 Catholic families in this immediate vicinity. But such schools as your Order and the Sacred Heart usually establish, if you receive Protestants, would always command scholars—as many as could be cared for. I must, however, add here some cautionary words. This country, though beautiful, is new, and the people, especially the Catholic portion, are not rich. The beginning of an

establishment will require patience and perseverance, and to Sisters accustomed to refinement . . . there must come privations, very many of them, at the outset. I will render all the aid in my power, and see that any who come shall be comfortably placed when they reach here, and until their own domicile can be made comfortable for them. . . .

"Begging from both Her Grace and yourself full instructions, and also that you will believe me,

"With the highest respect and esteem,

"Faithfully your friend and obedient servant,

"C. L. W."

The Bishop of Philadelphia soon afterwards visited St. Leonards and it was arranged that the sisters should travel under his protection. They sailed in the *Scotia*, and after the quickest voyage yet made across the Atlantic, they reached New York on the morning of August 12th, 1862, and proceeded the same day by train to Philadelphia. The Bishop took them to dine at his own house, and they long preserved the grateful memory of one little incident. An orchestra playing during the meal struck up "Home, Sweet Home!" to welcome the return of the Bishop, but he, fearing that the familiar notes might sadden the sisters with the thought of the distant home they had left, immediately ordered the tune to be changed.

The Bishop himself then conducted them to the Convent of St. Joseph, Summer Street, where they were received with warm hospitality. The next day he introduced them to the Rev. C. I. Carter, Vicar-General of the Diocese, who became at once their chief support and benefactor, being the first of the many staunch and loyal friends whom they found among the secular clergy of America.

On August 18th, Mother Mary Xavier and Mother Lucy Ignatia, with Father Carter, set out for Towanda, where they arrived the next day, and after seeing the place and deciding to accept the work, summoned the rest of the community to join them.

A short description of the early work in America, and of the sisters who began it, will not be considered a digression from the life of Mother Connelly, for it reveals the effect of her training and example on subjects who owed their ideal of religious life entirely to her teaching. They were now for the first time in the history of the Society to stand alone in strange surroundings, and at a distance which made prompt advice from her impossible. In this way the Society was put to its first test as regards the powers of development within it.

" Mother Mary Xavier Noble was one of those souls who seem to refuse nothing to God," writes one who knew her for many years. " From her earliest days in Religion she was looked upon as a model of perfection. She was eager for sacrifice, and though somewhat scrupulous, her judgment was enlightened and her will firm. Her power of government was early discovered by Mother Connelly and carefully cultivated in various tasks which involved a certain measure of authority over others. In her office of Superior, while austere to herself, and firm in the maintenance of religious discipline, she was much loved by her subjects."

Her affectionate veneration for Mother Connelly was unbounded, and there was a certain resemblance between these two souls, especially in their self-forgetfulness, their devotion to duty, and their boundless trust in Divine Providence.

Mother Lucy Ignatia Newsham was of a gentler disposition, and won all hearts by her untiring kindness and thoughtfulness for others. Her special virtue was peace, and her life was modelled on the Hidden Life of Nazareth.

It is only a knowledge of the heroic spirit of these two that can explain their acceptance of the work at Towanda, for the description of the house and grounds to which they came can only excite our wonder at the decision. Mr. W—— had not fulfilled his trust. The interests of the

Duchess had been neglected, and the land left unused. The " mansion," of which he had given so flattering a description, turned out to be a mere shed. It was through the Jesuits in Pennsylvania that the Duchess of Leeds was at length apprised of the character of her land-agent. Meanwhile, the nuns had to suffer the consequences.

" The house," wrote one of them, " was a frame building of two stories and an attic, with a slanting and unplastered roof that had been for years the habitation of rats and spiders; and the whole building was not in such good repair as the stables belonging to the land-agent. There was hardly any furniture, and instead of opening school at once, as they had intended, the sisters were obliged to spend the first few weeks in papering, painting, cleaning and otherwise rendering habitable their new convent.

" The whole building was so unsafe, owing to its foundations having given way in many parts, that the workmen who were repairing it feared every morning to find the occupants buried beneath its ruins."

Letters to England, full of cheerful good humour, told of the progress of the pioneers.

The lack of spiritual food was what they felt most keenly.

" We had not been able to make our eight days' retreat before leaving England, so at Christmas Mother Mary Xavier said we must make it. Therefore we began the Exercises on the 27th of December and ended on the morning of the Epiphany. . . . I do not remember if we had Mass on the 1st of January, but I do remember that we had none on the Epiphany. So we ended our retreat by our morning's meditation followed by some prayers. Then in our little chapel before the Blessed Sacrament we renewed our Vows, Mother Mary Xavier first, and then the others, in order. What a change from what we had

been accustomed to! Our Lord gave us all great consolation and courage. There were no useless regrets, but each one tried to be as bright and cheerful as if the Feast were all that it ought to have been."

The next year the sisters made their three days' retreat and renewed their Vows in the same way. They never had Mass on two consecutive Sundays, as the parish priest had to go to one of the many stations of which he had charge.

The sisters began by organising the parochial school in a room lent by the agent. It was attended by about eighty boys and girls, whose ages ranged from six to sixteen. They were entirely ignorant, especially in matters of religion, but they proved docile, and soon rewarded their teachers by their progress.

The convent school presented greater difficulties. When it was opened not a single child appeared. The sisters were obliged to go the round of the neighbouring town to look for pupils. By degrees they obtained a few. In the organisation of the schools they followed the instructions of the parish priest, a duty always inculcated by Mother Connelly, who wrote to remind them in their inexperience to consider in all things the wishes of the priests under whom they were to work:

"Take care to keep your children up to all that the good priests wish, and never forget that if your efforts are crowned with success, it is always safest and best to let all the glory go to God and His priests, rather than to take any to ourselves; and give way in all things regarding the parish to the priest of the parish. This is the way to do the work of God and to labour with real merit. I want to hear that the Bishop and priests are pleased with your efforts, and then I shall be at ease and know that you are working in docility and obedience to those whom God has placed over us. There is no virtue so necessary to every true religious as humility, true humility that

claims no reward here, but gives all to God, looking only to His good pleasure and the salvation of souls."

The winter of 1862–3 was unusually severe, and the English sisters were quite unprepared for its rigour. As they made their way to the parish church for daily Mass, the tears, forced from their eyes by the intense cold, fell in tiny globules of ice to the ground.

The church, a wooden building, was only heated on Sunday, so that the cold was terrible. More than once the wine froze in the chalice! The convent was not much warmer than the church. At night the snow came in through the unplastered roof on to the beds of the sisters. Their poverty was so great that they were once obliged to sell their old shoes to get something for dinner, and they often suffered from hunger.

A second party of sisters was sent out in 1863 to work in Father Carter's schools in Philadelphia. Father Carter wrote to the Superior-General suggesting that the sisters should leave Towanda and settle in some more suitable place. But Mother Connelly was loth to give up work that had been begun; and the sisters had concealed most of their difficulties and sufferings from her. So she wrote:

"*August*, 1863.

"To Father Carter.

"Very Reverend and dear Father in Christ,

"It is a great pleasure to know that you are pleased in having the sisters so soon at work in your schools, and I thank God with all my heart that we have been able to meet your views in sending them. . . .

"It may be that it would be better to exchange Towanda Convent for another more desirable position, but the Duchess would not listen to such a proposal, and for the sake of perseverance in carrying out what is once begun, I had rather keep it up with the hope of one conversion in a year among the Protestant children than

exchange it, or give up what has been begun with the full consent and approbation of Dr. Wood. I have great faith in this, and once a good work is begun under rightful authority we can go on with spirit and untiring determination.

. . . . . .

"We shall pray much for the prosperity of the first foundation in America, and hope never to part with it. Your first sisters are now with you in Philadelphia, where you will always have a right to the best and most zealous to train others to the same devotion to labour and hard work. How much we all thank you for giving us the chance of working for our dear Lord with you and in your schools. And we pray daily for you and Dr. Wood, our first American Bishop, God bless him!"

The efforts of the first sisters to live up to the principles in which they had been trained were successful. Great was Mother Connelly's joy when, after they had been working only two years in America, she received the following document from the Right Reverend Dr. Wood, Bishop of Philadelphia:

"*Cathedral, Philadelphia.*
"*December 14th,* 1863.

"The Bishop of Philadelphia having understood that the Religious Ladies of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus intend to apply to Rome for the approbation of their Institute, desires to give his earnest and cordial suffrage in favour of such approbation. He has two Communities now in his diocese, and from his own personal observation and most reliable information from others he feels convinced that their services will largely advance the interests of our Holy Religion, especially in the thoroughly Catholic education of youth, both in the most humble and the most elevated classes of society. He therefore hopes that this memorial will meet with a most

favourable reception from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, and that His Holiness will, in his unbounded and paternal affection, give his Apostolic Approbation to their Constitutions and Rules.

"Given at Philadelphia this 14th December, 1863,

"✠ James Wood,

"*Bishop of Philadelphia.*"

Father Carter wrote to Mother Connelly more strongly in the beginning of 1864, describing the convent at Towanda as "a miserable shanty, far inferior to your stables and cow-houses in England."

"With regard to the sufferings and privations of the Sisters at Towanda during the last winter and a part of this," he continues, "God knows it was worthy of the Christians of the first ages of the Church. They have borne them with patience and resignation, and never did I hear the least complaint, but they always carried cheerful and smiling countenances. I knew they could not be very flush of means, and for that reason I gave or sent them occasionally some little assistance. But it has only been within some few weeks that I began to suspect that they were deficient in necessaries. When I inquired I ascertained (not from the sisters) that some mornings when they got up they did not know where their breakfast would come from, and with regard to their bedding, they had to use their habits, cloaks, old pieces of carpet, etc. And even since, when I put the plain question on the subject, I got a smiling evasive answer. But I got sufficient, and this determined me what course to pursue."

He went on to beg Mother Connelly to send out some more sisters, as the health of the first missioners was failing. This she was unable to do at the time, but the result of the appeal was that Towanda was given up, and the sisters

went to join the community already established in Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia.

Their health had suffered severely indeed from the privations they had endured. Mother Mary Xavier became very ill, and Mother Stanislaus Gray, one of the second detachment from England, unable to bear the severity of the climate, died of consumption.

Meanwhile, Father Carter was most anxious that the sisters should have a convent outside the city, where children in need of country air might be received and educated. In May, 1864, he took Mother Mary Xavier and Mother Lucy Ignatia to inspect a Quaker Academy which was offered for sale at Sharon Hill in Delaware Co., about six miles from Philadelphia. The site was considered suitable, and the sisters took possession of the house in July and opened a school in September. Mother Connelly wrote to their benefactor:

"*June 22nd*, 1864.

"VERY DEAR AND REVEREND FATHER IN CHRIST,

"Your most kind letter bearing the news of your magnificent purchase of Sharon House reached me on my journey to the convents in the North of England, and I am almost afraid that this will be too late for to-morrow's mail, which must, if possible, take our best and most grateful acknowledgments to you. I need not say that no effort on my part shall fail in sending you three or four sisters to assist in carrying on the work in the most efficient way. I have already told Mother Mary Xavier that she could close the house at Towanda to meet your views if Sharon House should be purchased, so that I hope she will be in no doubt herself, and that you will be immediately released from any anxiety on that point. The Bishop's wish would have been enough even had you not purchased Sharon House.

"I have only time again to thank you, and to wish you every return of blessings and gratitude for your most

generous efforts for our dear Sisters in all you are doing for the Holy Child through them. But this conveys nothing of what we really feel for you and the excellent Bishop. God will reward you in the only way you want, and you will have the prayers of the innocent and the humble.

"Begging your blessings, and prayers,
"I am yours faithfully in J. C.,
"C. C."

Mother Connelly watched over her children in America with the same motherly solicitude as she showed to those in the various branch houses in England. All their interests were her own, and their friends were hers.

In the summer of 1867 Father Carter came to England and received a warm welcome at St. Leonards. Mother Connelly wrote to Mother Mary Xavier (June 13th, 1867):

"My dear Mother Mary Xavier,

"Father Carter arrived in London at Harley Street and came to St. Leonards on Monday. We are all delighted with him. . . .

"I have a better idea of your position in every respect than I should have had by letters in a half century. I did not even know that you are about one and a half miles from the Delaware. . . . I have promised Father Carter to go next Spring with two novices if he gets the consent of Dr. Grant, which he will be sure to do. The first thing I have to say is that Father Carter is very well satisfied, and I have told him that I should tell you so.

"The second, that I hope you will take his advice in temporalities of any consequence, where his experience is worth yours and mine and that of all the community together."

Interesting as the subject is, we should be straying too far from the life of Mother Connelly if we attempted to

follow here the varying fortunes of the American foundations. We must hasten on to the first and only visit paid by her to the convents in the United States in 1867.

She received an enthusiastic welcome both from the nuns and from the many friends they had made. It was on the occasion of this visit that she opened a new convent in West Philadelphia, and named it St. Leonards House. If it were not for her humility and reticence there might have been much to tell of how this visit affected her personally, but having no words of her own, we can only draw our conclusions from the facts.

Mother Connelly gave to her whole Society an example of religious detachment. She limited her visit to about five weeks on American soil. In the discharge of her duty in visiting her American convents and in transacting business she did not go out of her way to renew past acquaintances, nor to revisit the old scenes, to her so full of interest. Gladly would she have been welcomed at Grand Coteau, but she did not go. She received with simple affection the few relatives and friends who were able to visit her in her convents in Philadelphia, and she made arrangements for two of her nieces, Cornelia and Bella Bowen, to accompany her on her return to St. Leonards, there to finish their education.

At Sharon, especially, the sisters and children felt the spiritual power of Mother Connelly's presence. The children were strongly attracted to her, and many of the elder ones among them asked to speak with her in private. Nine of those who enjoyed this privilege afterwards joined the Society. She visited the novitiate several times, and the sweetness and firmness of her words greatly impressed the novices who heard her. On the last occasion she spoke in a way they never forgot of the marvellous dignity of their religious vocation and of the glory of working for God.

But the deepest consolation came to her heart as she realised that the foundations of the religious life in her

American houses had been laid according to the spirit and Rule of the Society. She found in the young American communities the same cheerful obedience, the same love of prayer, the same generosity and simplicity as she had left in England. Even the smallest observances of community life had been zealously transmitted to the new foundations, so that later on it became a wonder to the English province how their sisters across the ocean lived lives so exactly like their own. The *Cor unum et anima una* had truly spanned the Atlantic.

Not only in America but also in England the Duchess of Leeds became a benefactress to the Society. In 1863 she presented to Mother Connelly the ruins of the Old Palace, Mayfield, which afterwards became and remained for many years the Mother House of the Society. The circumstances which led up to the purchase of the property will be of interest.

The children of the St. Leonards school were accustomed to go for a picnic on Whit Tuesday. In 1862 they persuaded Mother Connelly to accompany them. She always found it hard to refuse their petitions, and this one was proffered on her feast day. The next matter of importance was to find a suitable goal for the excursion. Reverend Mother turned over a book of sketches of the ruins of Sussex and chose, for its historic interest, the Old Palace, Mayfield, the ancient country seat of the Archbishops of Canterbury.

On Whit Tuesday, May 26th, 1862, a merry party of children set out with Reverend Mother, several of the nuns, and the chaplain, the Rev. Joseph Searle. Never was there a more glorious picnic. All returned enchanted with the beauty of the surrounding country, the quaint little village straggling up the hill-side, and the historic ruins that crowned it. To Mother Connelly the ruins whispered a deeper appeal. Once they had been consecrated to God and filled with His praises.

With that intuition which so often guided her aright,

she longed and hoped to restore this ancient sanctuary to its holy purpose. She approached the Bishop on the subject, but he refused to sanction the purchase of the estate.

It happened, however, that the Duchess of Leeds had heard about Mayfield from the sisters and children since the day of the picnic, and had become interested. She ordered her agent to secure the property for her at any cost. This was done, and before long the Duchess made over the place to Mother Connelly on condition that she should restore the ruins.

The restoration became a matter of public interest. The Sussex Archæological Society, whose members had often visited Mayfield, was opposed to the restoration, and advised mere careful preservation.

Cardinal Wiseman took the opposite view. The restoration of the ancient shrines of England was one of his most cherished dreams, and he sent Mother Connelly enthusiastic congratulations and encouragement.

The architect chosen was Edward Welby Pugin, who set to work at once on the plans. It is said that he was struck by Mother Connelly's correct judgment, clearness of mind and determination. She was equally pleased with him.

The next question was how to raise the funds, which would far exceed the resources of the community. The ordinary devices of bazaars and sales of work were resorted to. Mother Connelly received generous contributions from friends. From Cardinal Wiseman came hearty encouragement and assistance. To him this restoration was a step towards the conversion of England—the hope of his life. It was the concern, not of the community alone, but also of the whole Catholic world. Inspired by these views, the Cardinal advised Mother Connelly to send her nuns to collect alms in the Catholic countries of Europe, as well as in England. He felt sure of success, and he was not mistaken. Alms flowed in generously and rewarded the exertions of the nuns.

The ruins at Mayfield were gradually restored according to the designs approved by Mother Connelly, though it was not till after her death that the work was completed. But long before this the children of the neighbourhood had been collected and formed into a little school. They were assembled daily amid the ruins, and at the approach of autumn they were taken into one of the rooms. Mother Connelly was most interested in these little ones : " For," she said, " we must never forget that it was not in a palace that the Holy Child gave His first blessing, but in a stable."

Shortly after the purchase of Mayfield the Duchess of Leeds founded two orphanages in Sussex, for boys and girls respectively. The latter she confided to the care of Mother Connelly and her nuns. It was begun at Ore, near Hastings, but transferred later to Mark Cross. In the course of time it became a Secondary School and did much good work.

Mother Connelly had long thought that the busy life at St. Leonards interfered to some extent with the spiritual training of the novices, and that the seclusion of Mayfield would make an ideal home for them. In the autumn of 1868 she made a beginning by sending there the second-year novices. Gradually she formed the plan of making Mayfield the Mother House of the Society, though this was not actually effected until after her death.

In 1923, owing to the expansion and development of the Society, its general government was transferred to a convent in Rome.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMMUNITY

Remember that you all have three Superiors : God, your religious Superior, and your own conscience. Make of your conscience a strict, watchful and diligent Superior, and you will be sure of finding in Our Lord and in your religious Superior very gentle, loving and forgiving Superiors.—*Letter of Mother Connelly, January 5th,* 1856.

THE spirit of fervour in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus was keeping pace during these years with its expansion in Europe and America. So faithfully was the Rule observed that a sister has left on record that during the fourteen years she lived at St. Leonards she could not remember having ever heard a sister break the Rule of silence in the refectory.

Mother Connelly was still the life and soul of her communities. The gracious dignity and quietness of her years remained bright and loving. The instinct of rulership was in her always, but it had been tempered by trials and by her own generous co-operation with grace, till she appeared to her religious children as the embodiment of patience and gentleness, and governed them—to use the words of her Rule—" with the strength of a Superior and the heart of a mother." The secret of the peace in her soul was its perfect abandonment into the hands of God, and this was the keynote of all her teaching.

For the guidance of Superiors she wrote :

" The Superior should often speak to the sisters of God, of occupying themselves with Him alone, wishing the Will of God alone, and His greater glory. She should endeavour to inspire a sincere love of His Holy Will, and

a great desire to offer themselves to be spent in His service, and to give themselves as victims offered in holocaust to procure His greater honour and glory.

" She shall accustom them to keep themselves united to God, to shake off their doubts and fears, and avoid twining round themselves. She shall comfort them by inducing them to repose generously in obedience and confidence in God, who never forsakes those who abandon themselves to Him."

Again, she writes to a Superior (May 1873):

" A very happy feast to you and to all with you in union with the Angels who surround our dear Lord. What a sweet consolation it is to think that union with the Will of God, and a heartfelt desire that He may be known, blest and served by all mankind is a constant act of adoration—that is of interior adoration. We may carry this into all our actions everywhere, as St. Teresa did, with very little trouble. Love to all and each."

Abandonment was to extend even to the acquirement of virtue. She discouraged the constant introspection with which so many souls impede their own progress. Instead she urged the generosity in countless daily sacrifices which leads quietly to the heights of sanctity. " Practise virtue," she often said, " and God will give you the possession of it." " Do humble deeds, and, without knowing it, you will become humble. Make acts of the love of God, and one day you will find your soul inundated with His love." " Acts of virtue prepare us to receive the grace and gift of it from God." Jesus Christ, under one form or another, was always the model that she set before her children:

" Let us try day by day to do what He would do, to speak as He would speak, to think as He would think, to desire what He desires, to love what He loves, and thus

to make our life one with His, being in one continued act of love from night to night and from year to year."

For a long time she was accustomed to give daily conferences or instructions upon the spiritual life to her community. "They were most beautiful," wrote a sister, "and supplied food for the mind for the whole day."

One special characteristic of her teaching was its sound doctrinal basis. Like St. Teresa, she had a dread of unenlightened devotion. She prepared her discourses carefully from the works of St. Thomas, St. Francis of Sales, Da Ponte, and Surin, the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Spiritual Combat*, Rodriguez on *Christian and Religious Perfection*, and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.

Much of her spiritual guidance has to be gleaned from her letters. Powerful and impressive in her speech, as a letter writer she was not gifted. She wrote hastily on any small scrap of paper, putting down in homely phrase just what she wanted to say and no more. Her sentences are sometimes confused, the thought outrunning its expression. They suffer, too, from the rather stilted and formal style in vogue. She was not particularly original in her ideas, but she had a talent for adapting and utilising the ideas of others.

That notes from her were treasured up by her children, and carefully passed on as a precious inheritance, shows that their value came from the heart that dictated them, and that words which seem ordinary, or even dull, to others, were rich with implicit meaning to those who knew her.

If she grew eloquent on any subject it was the love of God. She writes:

"If our thoughts, words and actions resemble those of our dearest Mother none of them will be useless. We shall think for the love of God and speak for Him and act for Him. The more we love God the more perfectly we shall be in the joy and liberty of His children—forgetting our-

selves and rejoicing in Him. We must take the joyful song of the lark soaring high in the heavens as a model of our recreation joy, and his descent into the hollow of the grass to build his nest as a picture of our silent humility out of recreation—that is, of what we wish to aim at."

A result of the love of God is confidence in His protection. As with all Founders, one of the hindrances that dogged Mother Connelly's steps through life was the want of money. This checked and hampered her in the great enterprises she would have undertaken—for she had a heart big enough to hold the world. But where the necessity was urgent, or where God's service required she would go straight on, ignoring the lack of funds, and making God her banker. Her trust was never deceived.

"One day," a sister relates, "when we were in great straits and Reverend Mother wished to incur a heavy expense for the needs of the community, I said to her, 'We have no money!' But she only replied, 'You do not think of God's Providence. Where should we be now if we had not trusted to It? God knows what we require.' And the needed sums came in."

For any of her children in trouble she showed her loving sympathy. One of them wrote:

"The simple and maternal affection with which she treated her religious children as well as the pupils of her schools was a shadow of the motherly love of Mary in the holy house of Nazareth."

Sometimes if she saw they were suffering she would write a tiny note of encouragement or reminder like the following:

"My dear Sister ——,

"Do not mind such trifles. Practise purity of intention and you will turn so to God that the ill-will or

offences of creatures will only affect you in proportion as God is affected."

"In these words," adds the sister who related the incident "she unconsciously described the degree of purity of intention to which we may suppose she herself had come, for she appeared to us always quite indifferent to praise or blame." To others at a distance went longer notes, like the following:

"*December 16th*, 1877.

"MY DEAR ——,

"I am very sure that you do not know how constantly you are in my mind nor how much I feel for the troubles you have had. . . . They have no doubt been real troubles, and the only way I can accept them is that our good God has provided them for you and for me. They are mine because I must share in all that falls to others and especially to those whose offices are more or less dependent upon me. You do not know, I am sure, what I have felt for you and with you, because I have never expressed to you the sympathy I have felt in your various difficulties and crosses. They had to come to you for Christ's dear sake, and if you are wounded by and with His dear Wounds I shall not be sorry for them, however hard to one's nature.

"Write to me, my dear child, and tell me how you are progressing and whether you find—a relief or whether there are any other difficulties.

"Do not think that your welfare and happenings are not at my heart—perhaps this thought may come. If so drive it away. I want very much to know that you are happy and that the change has been a benefit to you, which you do not regret. . . .

". . . I have been very ill for the last four weeks and I am now writing to you from our bed. The gout has taken to run all over my system and to become very troublesome.

"With much love, ever your loving Mother in J. C.,

"C. C."

A little later, to the same (December 27th, 1877): "It is sunshine to me on my sick bed to think of you as being again happy."

To another (undated):

"My dear Sister,

"I am satisfied that all these trials are temptations that a good God provides for you or allows to come upon you for your good. We have only to look into the lives of the saints to find that they passed through the same. Peculiarities of mind are not necessarily 'eccentricities.' You are certainly not eccentric. I should say on the contrary too centric rather than otherwise. I went to Communion this morning and begged of St. Ignatius to give you his own strong, zealous spirit. And now I think if you offer yourself to God, saying 'Receive, O Lord, etc.'—the prayer of St. Ignatius—that you may know the Holy Will of God as to your vocation to America, you may obtain this great grace. It is a great thing to know God's Will and to be ready to do it generously. I will not say what I think about it, because I wish to leave you to God's inspirations and to your fidelity to those same.

"Ever yours lovingly in J. C.,

"C. C."

Her sympathy overflowed whenever she met distress. A lady whose daughters were at school at St. Leonards had an interview with her once. The talk lasted about an hour. She had many trials to endure, and she declared that for the first time in her life she had found a real sympathiser and helper. That interview was a comfort and consolation to her for many years. She never saw Mother Connelly again, but she always spoke of her as a wonderful woman and a great servant of God. Later, when one of her daughters wished to join the Society, she said she felt the greatest consolation at giving her "into the care of one so wise and holy."

Mother Connelly was insistent on the value of "little things;" she writes: "I repeat to you: Be faithful, trim your lamps with the oil of fidelity in little things. This is to co-operate with divine grace, to ensure your perfection, and to send you on to all that Our Blessed Lord asks of you, and to the fulfilment of His designs upon each of you."

"If you have faith you will learn the value of a suffering and hidden life, and it is to this life you are especially called by the very name you bear. Be then like the Holy Child Jesus in your thoughts, in your words, and in all your actions, cherishing diligence and fidelity, and be persuaded that nothing is little with God if it is in the practice of virtue."

Not in words only, but also in daily practice, she taught the value of faithfulness in the tiny duties which build up our life. Allowing for the inevitable tendency of human nature to slacken, she began on what some would call rigorous lines.

On one occasion she had ordered all the community to learn and practise "tatting" (an old-fashioned kind of lacework then being revived). One sister particularly disliked this order. She paid no attention to it; but continued a piece of point-lace on which she was engaged. Some days later she presented her handiwork to Mother Connelly, expecting praise and thanks. It was beautifully done and would have made a valuable gift for a benefactor. But Mother Connelly had a more important lesson to teach. We must remember that she was laying the foundations and making the traditions of religious life in the Society. Under such circumstances impressive warnings would sometimes be needed. She felt that one was needed now, and that it would be understood. She quietly asked the sister: "Who gave you leave to do this instead of the tatting?" "Oh, nobody." Without another word the piece of work was thrown into the fire.

On another occasion when she was a prisoner in her room, crippled by rheumatic gout, she ordered her Assistant to assemble the community for a chapter at which she herself was accustomed to preside. " Oh, no, Reverend Mother. I could not do it," was the Assistant's answer, and she made no preparations to obey. At the usual hour the bell was heard summoning the sisters. They entered the chapter room and saw, to their astonishment, Mother Connelly seated at her table. At the conclusion of the chapter, the Assistant hastened to her side, repentant and amazed: " Mother, how did you get downstairs? Did the Angels carry you? " With the utmost pain she had succeeded in descending by crawling along and seating herself on each step. " It was necessary to teach you to obey," she said.

Such examples of sternness were the exception, not the rule. The Society was trained from the beginning in the gentleness and sweetness which have always characterised the dealings of those who have best understood and interpreted its spirit. " Stiffness and rigour," Mother Connelly wrote, " will not bring forth love, and these are *not* the spirit of the Holy Child."

In all things, as was right, she herself gave a steady example. Her obedience to her ecclesiastical Superiors was prompt and entire, and however unpalatable their orders might be she never allowed them to become the subject of general comment.

One day news was brought to her that the dairy was on fire. She was soon on the spot, giving orders and directing the nuns and servants, for no fire-engine was available. She was suffering as usual from rheumatism, so after a time the Infirmarian came up to her and said, " Reverend Mother, you have been here long enough. Will you please go away and rest? " Without hesitation Mother Connelly turned and obeyed, though the request must have been most unwelcome under the circumstances.

Her love of poverty was conspicuous. She liked to see

a religious habit patched and darned, and would speak of such decorations as " honourable scars." The sisters for a long time endeavoured in vain to replace her old patched habit by a new one. Once, when she was in bed, they succeeded in obtaining possession of it by strategy and sewed in a new skirt. For some weeks this passed unnoticed. Then she missed the familiar patches, sent for the culprit and insisted on the restoration of the old skirt. She had a great reverence for the religious habit, often prayerfully kissed it, and chose some short prayers which were to be said each morning by the sisters when putting it on.

She was very particular about the mending, and used to visit the clothing rooms once a month, and look through what had been done.

She always encouraged the sisters to make acts of detachment, and to watch for opportunities of small sacrifices, which she called grains of incense to be burnt before the Lord. A sister relates that she had brought with her from home a beautiful ebony crucifix of some value, prized for many reasons. It was really too handsome for a poor religious, but for some time after her profession Mother Connelly allowed her to keep it hung over her bed. One night, on retiring to her cell, she found it had disappeared. Her first impulse was to go in search of it. But she overcame herself and silently made an offering of her crucifix to the Holy Child. A few weeks later a " Drawing of Prizes " to help on the funds for the restoration of Mayfield was to take place. The community were called to see the display of presents and work. There in the midst of them was the beautiful crucifix, now mounted on three ebony steps. Perhaps the sister gave a little start, for Mother Connelly beckoned to her and whispered, " You have your crucified Lord in your heart now, dear, so you can part with His image from over your bed."

She was accustomed to make the round of the house

frequently, staying for a while in the different departments, approving or disapproving, instructing, inspecting or helping, but always encouraging. " One of the most delightful traits in her character," wrote a sister, " was her bright encouraging spirit. The least little effort in any one was noticed and approved. She would begin by praising: " That is quite promising—now you will do it beautifully." Then came the " but," and all the mistakes would be pointed out. Yet she never left anyone discouraged. She made everything seem possible and easy.

A duty on which she often insisted was that of preparation. If any event of importance, either spiritual or temporal, were approaching, she would tell the sisters to prepare for it with care, and her unfailing question before a retreat was, " What preparation are you making for the retreat? " She tried to give the sisters the advantage of experience in the different offices. During the school holidays she would take the opportunity of sending young sisters to help in various kinds of work, domestic and otherwise. " You may never have to do it, but it will be a great advantage to you to know how things should be done." She used to say that such general knowledge was especially valuable, as it enabled the sisters to realise and consider the work of others.

One day a Prefect complained of the inefficiency of a newly-professed sister in the school. Mother Connelly saw that she had not been patient enough—and explained to her that she must help her through the first difficulties of unaccustomed work. " Go to class with her yourself, and help her until you are able to come to me with a better report." The Prefect obeyed, and discovered before long that the sister had the makings of an excellent teacher. To let a beginner believe herself a failure was to multiply useless members in the Society, according to Mother Connelly. Acting on this maxim, she was always unwilling to remove a sister immediately from an office in

which she was not succeeding. "We must help her to succeed a little better first and restore her confidence," she would say, "and then we will change her if necessary. But we must not make her failure the evident reason of the change." In her code, every one was capable of everything until the contrary was proved.

She always disapproved of overwork and excitement. "You are too eager," she often said to the nuns; "you must be earnest, but not eager," for she desired moderation in all things, and was as much opposed to overactivity as to idleness.

Of an incident connected with the extra work done for her own feast a sister recalls that Mother Connelly had wished one year for a carpet for the sanctuary. She continues:

"How well I remember the devotion of nuns and children and the surprise of Mother Connelly at seeing a magnificent carpet for the whole length of the church, worked in roses and lilies.

"As square after square was unrolled she exclaimed, 'What! More!'—'What! More still!' But always thoughtful for others, she feared that their efforts to give her pleasure had been too strenuous. She was distressed at the excess of work, and took occasion from it, a few days later, to forbid all sitting up late or getting up early to work for the feast."

She was very careful in distributing and defining the duties of each office, and was accustomed to say that almost all disturbance or disorder in a community would be avoided if each sister knew exactly what work was expected of her.

She never passed over a want of courtesy in those under her care. Religious politeness was to be based on reverence. "I would wish to see you act towards each other as princesses," she said, "for the Court of the Lord is around." Then she would remind the sisters that they

were spouses of the King of kings, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

Though she had as little relish for singularity as for unintelligent routine, Mother Connelly never thwarted aspirations for greater perfection. On the contrary, she met any applicants for extra prayer or penance half-way. To a Superior she wrote:

"Be careful not to thwart in others desires for higher things. You may be thwarting the Holy Spirit. This is one of the great responsibilities of Superiors, who have souls to answer for as well as bodies."

The following "proposals" were sent round by her one year as suggestions for Lenten resolutions:

"That we shall particularly unite ourselves to the Passion of Our Lord during Holy Mass, placing ourselves on Mount Calvary, remembering that the past, the present and the future are equally present to Our Lord and that the Sacrifice of the Mass is to us the same as that on Calvary. Oh, my dear Sisters, how is it that we see so few souls truly united to the Passion of Our Lord? So few who are willing to be crucified with Him? Because of failure in recollection and mortification. Because of forgetfulness of the sufferings of our Model and Love. Let us no longer fail but now try our very best, saying: 'I will now begin. Yes, my Jesus! I will in spirit follow Thee to Calvary and feel the stripes they laid upon Thee—like David in his vision of Thee be wounded with Thee and in Thee, that on the Cross I may die with Thee—in all my daily obediences and little sacrifices be one with Thee, and never seek myself in blame or praise, in contempt or honour but Thee, sweet Victim of Charity.'

"For our last point let us resolve never to say that little word 'I' unless absolutely necessary. Let us bow our heads to make an interior act of humility when we

have used it without absolute necessity in fulfilling the duties of our office."

The last few words recall how Mother Connelly disliked the use of the word "I." Both in speaking and in writing she preferred "we," us," "our." She used to tell the nuns "that little I" was the greatest enemy they had to fight against.

Mother Connelly had great power and facility in leading a recreation, so that these hours, sometimes looked upon as a difficult duty, became in her company a real delight, refreshing soul and body after the labours of the day. She encouraged all the sisters to contribute to the general merriment, and was ever ready to listen with the kindest appreciation to all they had to say. "She was all sunshine in my eyes," wrote a sister. "None enjoyed a joke or piece of fun more than she did. It was a pleasure to watch her delight when she saw the sisters enjoying themselves." She would never allow critical or unfavourable remarks on others at recreation. If mention was ever made at such times of those who were hostile to the Society, she would say quietly, "Leave them to God," or, "We are what we are in the sight of God, nothing more nor less." Her respect for ecclesiastical authority and for all who were consecrated to the service of God made her prohibit at recreation any remarks concerning them. In general she would say that it was safer to talk of things than of people.

The first office she had chosen for herself was that of Infirmarian. Her other duties obliged her to resign it after a time, but her tender solicitude for the sick never failed. She taught that invalids were not to be considered a burden, but a blessing to the house. Every day she visited them herself—and generally brought some little gift to please or amuse them. With the insight of a mother she understood their needs and provided for their comfort. She was displeased to find in the

infirmary the common crockery which was in general use, and went down to the town herself to buy something more suitable. She decided upon white cups and saucers with a pink band, and arranged that in future the invalids should have neat white tray-cloths in order to make their food look more appetising, for she wished everything in the infirmary to be bright and cheerful.

Many examples might be given of her personal care of the sick. A young lay sister soon after her first profession was threatened with consumption. Mother Connelly brought her to St. Leonards and, not content with reports about her cough and sleepless nights, insisted on having her in a room adjoining her own, so that she might herself attend to her during the night. The disease was averted, and the sister always attributed her cure to the devotion of her Superior. Once when a sister had to undergo a serious operation in the convent, Mother Connelly remained with her the whole time.

She would yield to no one her place beside the dying. It was to her that her children looked for guidance in their life and at its end. And she never failed them. Strong and tender then as they had always known her—she watched by their bedsides and supported each one in the last fight. They loved her serene presence and felt the strength of her prayer. Many were the beautiful and consoling deaths at which she assisted.

For others who, though not seriously ill, were ailing in mind or body, she had the same motherly care. It is often those who are not confined to the infirmary, but who are able to work, who suffer the most in religious life. While encouraging them to despise little ailments Mother Connelly was quick to detect real need and skilful in finding remedies.

She did not consider delicate health an insurmountable obstacle to a vocation, provided there were virtue and some ability. She would say that the delicate were often more earnest than others, for they were obliged always to be

making efforts which strengthened the will and drew down a special blessing from Our Lord. One day she said to a young nun: "How often do you thank God for being delicate?" The sister, surprised, made no reply, which Mother Connelly perceiving said gently, "My child, you have the help of a constant reminder that you are on your way to God." Mother Connelly's views regarding the admission of subjects in many ways coincided with those of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. The qualifications considered by this saint as of the utmost importance were a large heart, a docile spirit, a cheerful disposition, common sense and sound judgment. Of a girl proposed as a candidate for religious life we find Mother Connelly writing that she may come if she has "good common sense as well as piety."

She did not look for saints, but for the material which makes saints. Neither did she set much store by natural gifts apart from supernatural aims. The sisters were to aim at true and solid holiness as the object of religious life, "remembering that humility and obedience and a spirit of recollection and prayer are to be more valued than great talents and learning." [1]

To a future postulant she wrote:

"Where there is a true vocation God gives the grace necessary, and you need not think whether you are very clever or not. I am particularly pleased with the expression of your letter and with your trust in God, who never fails us when we confide in Him."

Mother Connelly's gift of personal influence was rarely used in the case of a vocation. She knew her power, and was humbly fearful of the human element preponderating in so grave a matter. When a possible vocation was spoken of, she generally said, "Leave her to God." She never liked to be the first to interview an intending postulant, but would put her off, or send some other

[1] Rule, S.H.C.J.

sister to speak with her. Her own remarkable vocation had taught her from the first that religious life is a life of sacrifice, and she rejoiced when a postulant could give as a reason for wishing to be a nun, "I want to sacrifice myself." "If the spirit of sacrifice is at the root of a vocation, I have every hope," she would say. "Most aspirants want to follow Our Lord before they have given much thought to the prelude in His invitation: 'Deny thyself; take up thy cross.'" The following letter was written to one who wished to be received as a postulant. The pictures represented (1) The Holy Child standing with His arms extended, before a Cross, as on the Society medal, (2) The Holy Child with arms uplifted in prayer to His Heavenly Father. She intended, in sending them, to convey the idea that suffering and prayer form the two great features of religious life.

"*January* 10*th*, 1873.

"My dear E——,

"Your letter of the 7th gave us much pleasure, as we feel convinced you have done all in your power to know God's most sweet and holy Will. We shall give you a very cordial welcome, and I trust you will find joy and rest in the Heart of the Holy Child Jesus, and in the society of the Angels who surround Him.

"I send you, my dear child, two little pictures illustrative of our life which must say to you more than I could put in volumes of letters. You know that you will have at least three months as a postulant before being clothed, then you will study the practical part of our religious life, and prove your steadfastness of purpose not only in will but in deed. Our motto is 'Actions, not words,' and I doubt not that you will find the actions much more consoling than words.

"May Our dear Lord ever bless your good-will and accept you as His own beloved Spouse.

"Ever yours affectionately in J. C.,

"C. C., Sup. Gen."

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To one who had just entered the Society she writes :

" Though your dear letter remained so long unanswered, you have very often been in my mind and in my intentions before Our Lord. . . . I hope you made an excellent retreat, and truly practical resolutions, and that you have made notes to be referred to, to keep you in the right spirit for the year—at least till you make another—that you may grow each year more strong in faith, in zeal, generosity and charity. . . . Write and let me know all about your retreat and your progress, and indeed all that interests you, and ever pray for your loving Mother in J. C."

In another letter she writes :

" May your stability prove true till constancy is sealed by death, and by a death which is quickly to introduce you to the Beatific Vision, where you are to be filled with the joy of heavenly light and encompassed by the ecstatic delight of loving God without interruption. Now we must delight in Him by our homely acts of charity, and, by our passive co-operation, not resist the love that would fill our poor hearts. Let us *not* resist, for we are *ourselves* the only obstacle to the overflowing of His divine love."

For many years Mother Connelly kept the training of the novices in her own hands. When she was obliged to pass on the work to others she always maintained a great interest in the novices and in their mistress, and would occasionally give them instructions herself. She knew how much depended upon the early training in religious life, and she spared no effort to form strong, sensible, devoted nuns, idealists in their love of Christ, and practical in proving that love by daily self-sacrifice.

She often impressed upon the Novice-Mistresses the dignity of their charge in training the future spouses of Christ. To a Novice-Mistress who had just taken up her duties she sends a list of subjects of instructions and a time-table for the novices, and adds :

" In writing out these hours I have constantly in view that our novices must never forget that the vineyard of the Holy Child Jesus requires ardent and earnest labourers, not devout statues. And though I have put down the practical subjects to be introduced as frequently as possible into the instructions, it is with no intention to exclude the usual course of spiritual instruction on the different religious virtues.

" Theory requires practical examples to be introduced, or it all vanishes into smoke before it can sink into the heart. It also requires practice in every-day events to make it take root. The greatest lecturers in Rome exemplify the theology they teach by the most simple parables. Stories from the Fathers of the Desert, etc., of St. Francis of Assisi, etc., are of more value than twenty long explanations of faith, hope, charity, obedience, for the former strike the mind and the heart. "

She taught the Novice-Mistress that her main office was to instil into the novices the intention they should have in leaving the world and entering religion; " that is, to unite themselves more to God, mortifying their senses, their imagination, passions, inclinations and aversions that they may finally be united to our crucified Lord and thus look forward to a glorious eternity."

While watching over the novices " with more than maternal love," she was to exercise them in humility and obedience, " increasing their courage and rooting out as far as possible the lightness, weakness and foolish caprices which enfeeble and undermine the mind, so that like strong women they may achieve the work of solid and lasting perfection." With this object she was to teach them " not to trust in themselves, but to put all their confidence in God, and in the intercession and protection of His most glorious Mother."

Their aims were to be wide and generous. The Novice-Mistress was to endeavour to " fill their hearts with a

longing for the salvation of souls, to teach them to pray often for the Church, and for her prelates, for the spread of the Faith, for the conversion of infidels and sinners, and for princes, especially those of their own country."

The following is an example of her letters to the novices :

"*November* 12*th*, 1876.

"My dear Novices,

"On this dear Feast of St. Stanislaus we are with you in spirit, for it does not take much time for the spirit to wing its way to our dear ones.

"How much we must all pray for each other, that we may prove our gratitude to God for all He has done for us, and for our dear little Society of the Holy Child.

"I wish we could pray so fervently as to obtain for all the true spirit of the Holy Child, and the love of all that He loved and taught. Prayer and self-denial will obtain this if we persevere in humility. Humility must be dear to us, as the apple of our eye, for all true charity is founded on humility, which is mistrustful of self, and full of confidence in God. How truly ought we to cherish and be grateful for every little cross we have, for it is only suffering which brings us to the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

"May our dear Lord give you this sweet joy is the best wish of your affectionate Mother in J. C.,

"Cornelia Connelly."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RULE

1853–1877

Let us direct in the Lord our strength and intention to the end that holy obedience be always perfect in us.—*Rule, S.H.C.J.*

THE spirit and ideals of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus are all comprised within the sweet sound of its name. For the Rule points out that in the mysteries of the Childhood of our Divine Lord are to be found all the means of perfection for the nuns, and of help for their neighbour:

"According to the end and spirit of our special vocation, mysteries of the most sublime teaching are to be found in the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus, in which God manifests in a most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love. In that Divine Child, enclosed for nine months in the womb of His Virgin Mother, born in a stable, exposed to suffering and poverty, fleeing into Egypt, hidden and labouring in a humble workshop, is found our Divine Master, our Model and our Spouse, and from the living wells of His perfect humility, His divine charity, and His absolute obedience, we are to receive the spirit of the Holy Child Jesus."

Thus the first spiritual teaching of the Society puts before its members the lessons they should learn from Him for their own interior life, that they may come to that most blessed state of spiritual childhood to which Christ assigned the high places in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The spirit of a child of God is the truest and most fitting attitude towards Our Father in Heaven and one

which draws down upon us the richest graces. Its characteristics are an abandonment of self into the Hands of God, as real as that of a child who believes completely in its mother, an expectation from Him, not only of food for soul and body, but also of love and sympathy and careful provision and tender foresight and swift healing and forgiveness. It comprehends too the candour and simplicity of a child, being happy with God, saying exactly what we mean to Him, and acknowledging our faults without discouragement or dejection. It means also the matter-of-fact humility of a child, who does not pretend to be strong or wise or learned, but who is content to be protected and dependent and always needing help.

To the religious of the Holy Child Jesus, this childlike spirit comes as a precious inheritance. It was beautifully exemplified in their Mother Foundress, of whom we hear: "This abandonment of self into the Hands of God, simply doing each moment what appeared to her to be the most perfect, was her special attraction. Her constant habit was to act from the movement of grace without reflection, or, as she expressed it in a prayer she composed in honour of the Holy Child, "to depend in all things on Thee, as Thou didst depend upon Thy Mother and St. Joseph." It gave her that marvellous freedom from anxiety, scruple or introspection, that absence of self in any form, which made the strength and the sweetness of her spiritual life.

After the sisters have thus learned "in this school of Divine Science," to rest their nothingness and misery fearlessly upon the infinite love and mercy of God, they are free to run with ardour in the way that He has pointed out. Their life of outward apostolate is to be distinguished by simplicity, humility, obedience and charity, together with a spirit of affectionate devotion to the works of the Society. Simplicity is shown in the absence of pose. Most of the troubles of the spiritual life come from our efforts to be or to appear to be other than we are. Simplicity is content to remain in its nothingness, receiving

all from God, content to have no virtues of its own. As Mother Connelly wrote, " Abandon the possession of any virtue to God, and be contented with the practice." Simplicity lays aside all outward show of austerity. Not that penance is to be absent; mortification is to pervade the whole life of the nuns; by their Rule they are to aim at " continual progress in self-abnegation and mortification in all things "; but everything is to be done quietly and lovingly, without attracting attention, as in the Holy House of Nazareth. Learning there the lessons of the Child Jesus, we find that which He especially claimed to teach. In loving Him we must long to be with Him and to imitate Him in the humiliations of His life and death. In religious life the opportunities for doing this abound. They are not generally of that magnitude which startles the soul into great acceptances, but rather the hundred small daily scuffles with self-love, which can push one unawares astonishingly close to sanctity.

Humility goes hand in hand with poverty. As humility prefers the honour of God to that of self, so poverty yields up all material possessions, and acquires instead the riches of God. Hardly any part of the religious ideal is so consistently misunderstood by the world as that of poverty. It is not in essence economy, or thrift, or the Simple Life—as if religious Orders were made lax by the use of telephones, or electric lighting or any of the instruments required to do their work well. It is the renunciation of all personal proprietorship; and this involves a constant and searching self-discipline which passes unnoticed by the outside observer. There is very little choice in food, clothing, lodging or materials for one's work. The religious accepts what is provided, whether it be to her taste or not. Again, she has, as the Rule states, nothing but " the bare use of all that is provided." She cannot treat anything as if it belonged to herself; she cannot turn anything from its destined purpose, and—hardest of all—she cannot give anything

away. Lastly, she has to ask permission for all that she requires, even for the smallest articles of daily use—a necessity which drives home the significance of the vow of poverty in a manner hard to realise by anyone who has not experienced it. Thus, while the nuns enjoy the hundredfold promised by Our Lord in this world, being sufficiently provided with all necessary temporal things, they are led to realise, hour by hour, that they are indeed "the poor of Christ," "having nothing but possessing all things," learning thus to keep the heart empty for God, though the study or work-room be full of up-to-date appliances.

In the "absolute obedience" of the Child Jesus, the nuns are to find their model once more. They are to "give themselves up to perfect obedience, recognising the Superior, whoever she may be, in the place of Christ our Lord, and bearing her interior love and reverence, they are to obey entirely, promptly, cheerfully, and with the necessary humility." It is this spirit of faith which makes of obedience, not a degradation, but a glory, and in return for the tiny fidelities of daily life, gives back the joyous sense of personal service, of a precious consecration, ennobling and vitalising actions which might otherwise have been dull and tedious.

Mother Connelly not only succeeded in instilling into her Society a spirit of the most loyal and whole-hearted obedience, but she practised it herself towards her ecclesiastical Superiors on every occasion. In great things as in small, she obeyed, as if God had spoken, the slightest word from lawful authority. This will be seen especially in her conduct with regard to the revision of the Rule.

In the many occasions that occurred for the practice of charity she set a wonderful example to her Society. It was said of her in connection with the adornment of the church, "She was never contented with anything but the best." The same words may be applied to her wishes for the spiritual temple she was building for God—her Society.

As she gave the sisters the highest motive for obedience, and showed them Our Lord as the Superior they were to obey, so again, as the object of their love, she proposed Our Lord, " whom each one shall endeavour to recognise in the other as in His own image."

The work with the children, whether spiritual or material, was to be transformed into the same sweet service :

" They will constantly strive to see Jesus in each of the children whom they have to train, and they will often recall to mind what their Divine Spouse has Himself declared : ' Whatsoever you do unto one of these my least brethren, you do it unto Me,' and again showing His disciples a little child : ' He who receives one such little child in my name, receiveth Me.' "

Charity has been the special virtue of many in the Society, and has led them to heights of holiness. A young sister wrote to her father in the early days : " I have now been six years . . . in the dear Society of the Holy Child Jesus. . . . I have never once heard an unkind word said of or to anyone since I came here." Many years later, an old nun, who had been professed nearly sixty years, was preparing for confession on her deathbed. She asked to be reminded of her faults. " Faults against charity, Mother," suggested someone tentatively. " Oh no ! " she replied, " I could not tell an untruth to our dear Lord. I don't think I have ever done anything against charity."

Such a life, ruled by God, surrounded by God, serving God in others all day long, with His Body and Blood for daily food and Himself as Friend and Refuge under the same roof, is indeed happiness almost too great for this place of exile, when faith grows strong enough to realise it. Mother Connelly wrote in this connection : " We

shall never know till we get to heaven what our bountiful Lord has done for us in choosing us out of the world to form in our hearts a ' closed garden ' where He will dwell with us in secret and condescend to love and be loved by His creatures with an intensity far beyond all human love. This is indeed a foretaste of heaven."

Thus the crown of religious life is joy, a joy independent of outward things, springing from union with God Whose presence makes eternal bliss, Whom to know is to love and to serve is to reign. In such a life the " divine charity " overflows abundantly. It appears in the love of God which increases daily and almost unawares in the soul. It shows in acts of sisterly love and mutual help. It permeates the Society and gives a special beauty to the relations between superiors and subjects, helping to maintain that government, strong, gentle, peaceful and steady, in which the spirit of Mother Connelly has been so faithfully passed down to her successors.

Her system of government was based upon the traditional methods which have been handed down from the great founders of religious Orders. But she breathed into the outlines of her Rule something of her own peculiar generosity and love. She felt that this Rule had been given to her by God, and that it was the most precious thing she had to bequeath to the Society. She herself set an example of unfailing loyalty and devotion in the practice of it. " We love our holy Rule," she once wrote, " as we love our dear Mother the Church, and more than our life." It was in connection with this, her chief treasure, that the hardest trials she had to suffer were to arise.

She knew that the Rule she had brought with her from Rome in 1846 was incomplete. In course of time, Constitutions organising the government of the Society would be required, as well as more definite legislation upon the holding of property, the admission of subjects and other matters. All these things had to be regulated under

Canon Law, and some knowledge of the civil law of the country would also be advisable. Therefore, with the approval of Cardinal Wiseman, Mother Connelly deferred the adjustment of these external matters until the Society should have gained a working knowledge of its own requirements.

In 1853 she was summoned to Rome by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, which was then considering the Rule with a view to its approbation. But the complications which had arisen from the conduct of Pierce Connelly brought matters to a standstill. The dispute about the St. Leonards property and the hostility of Mr. Connelly, which might at any time be renewed, appeared to imperil the existence of the Society. The Sacred Congregation, while giving every encouragement to perseverance, determined to defer its formal approbation of the Rule until the future of the Order in temporal matters should be better assured. It was not until 1869 that Mother Connelly once more received an intimation that her presence in Rome would be likely to secure the approbation of the Rule. She at once set out on the journey with great joy. Again her hopes met with disappointment. The Sacred Congregation deputed a Franciscan Consultor to attend to the business, who declared that a complete revision of the Rule would be necessary before it could be presented for approval. He suggested many changes in the government and administration. Especially he urged that each house should be separate and independent. This alteration and others equally repugnant to the mind of her Society, Mother Connelly was able to avert. She defended courageously the Rules and customs under which the Society had worked successfully for twenty-three years. Some important changes, however, she was obliged to accept.

The work occupied two months. As soon as it was completed, Mother Connelly prepared to return to St. Leonards. She wrote to the community there :

" It is a joy to think of the possibility of soon being with you all, for though we are in the midst of Saints on earth, we are not under the same enclosure with Our Lord, and this is *a great trial*."

Padre Anselmo assured her that she could do no more at present, and that he would see to the printing and presentation of the Rule.

But the strenuous labours in Rome, and still more the effect of her anxiety about the Rule, had exhausted Mother Connelly's strength. Her health broke down completely when she returned to St. Leonards, and she was ill intermittently for several months.

In February 1870 the Rule arrived from Rome, accompanied by a letter from Cardinal Barnabò, directing that it should be translated into English and a copy sent to each house to be signed by the professed sisters in token of their consent to the changes that had been made. They were to be free to add any observations of their own. Accordingly, in March the copies were sent round, together with a translation of the Cardinal's letter. In sending the revised Rule thus, without previous explanation, Mother Connelly made a serious mistake. It was largely due to the fact that she was ill at the time and unequal to serious exertion. The changes required in the Rule had dawned gradually upon herself during the two months in Rome. She had seen the reasons which lay behind. She had been let into the secrets of that quiet, age-learned wisdom which regulates the care of the Church for the " most chosen portion of the flock." In England and America the nuns had never realised that changes in the Rule were probable or possible. From her own example they had imbibed the veneration with which they regarded it. Had she waited till she was able to take it herself and read it publicly in each house, her personal influence would probably have obtained what the mere perusal of it failed

to effect. As it was, letters of disapproval and protests arrived from all sides.

In spite of their dislike of the changes in the Rule, the loyalty of most of the communities held firm. The professed sisters signed the Rule freely, though with regret. But in one house the Superior and community, while sending their signatures to Mother Connelly, sent at the same time to Rome, unknown to her, an appeal against the Rule and against her government. Just in time to prevent Mother Connelly from sending the signatures to Rome, a young sister in this community wrote to her a full account of what had been done.

It was then that she realised the strength of the feeling that the proposed changes in the Rule had aroused. Unaware of the compulsion that had been put upon her at Rome, the sisters held her responsible for all. This was especially the case at ——. In their zeal for the Rule, they had waited for no explanation. The Superior, finding that her course of action was known, took up a line of determined opposition to Mother Connelly. She herself was a woman of great ability, and had kept her community in admirable religious discipline. Like so many of the first Superiors in the Society, she had been placed in authority very young, and had remained for about twenty years undisturbed. The government was not at that time fully organised, and the visitations of the Mother-Foundress could not be regular or frequent. Indeed, since the rapid development of the Society in 1862–3 the burden weighing on Mother Connelly as Superior over twelve communities, unassisted by any Council, had been an impossible one. She was at the same time local Superior of the convent at St. Leonards with its community, novitiate and schools, and she had the responsibility of the Rule and of the whole destiny of the Society upon her.

The influence of Mother X. in her own community was

paramount. She had also formed close friendships with influential persons in the neighbourhood and with priests, to whom she imparted her own unfavourable views of her Superior's government. She began actively to build up a party against Mother Connelly, probably with a view to separating and forming an independent community. In this, however, she was not supported by the sisters. She persevered long enough to cause divisions in the community and great suffering to Mother Connelly. Then, finding the situation that she had created intolerable, she abandoned religious life.

The result of her appeal to Rome was that the process of the approbation of the Rule was once more arrested, and the Bishop of Southwark [1] was commissioned to make a special visitation of the Houses of the Society and investigate the grievances.

The Episcopal visitation took place in the spring of 1872. For the moment the revised Rule was set aside and peace and unity were restored.

Mother Connelly now begged the Bishop to convene a General Chapter for the canonical election of a Superior-General and Assistants. For twenty-six years she had ruled alone as Foundress and Mother, and now she felt that this informal family life could not last much longer. The decree of visitation from Rome, and the division in one community, all tended to create a belief that the Society was about to be suppressed. The wildest reports were in circulation. It was openly stated that Mother Connelly had been excommunicated. Would-be postulants were dissuaded by priests and bishops from entering the Society and boarding "a sinking ship." Even professed religious were warned by priests against remaining in the Society. The prejudice against Mother Connelly began to invade the communities though the majority

[1] Dr. Danell, who had been nominated Bishop of Southwark after the death of Dr. Grant in June 1870.

remained true to her. She could not fail to be conscious of a certain change, but in her humility she marvelled rather that so many of her children loved and trusted her. A letter to the Bishop (November 23rd, 1872) expresses her feelings. After begging him to come himself to perform a ceremony of profession, she continues :

" It is more than ordinarily necessary for us to be upheld by the presence of our Bishop after the trials of this singular year, which God alone knows how we have sus tained without breaking down totally ! I can truly say, my Lord, that if there were not an almost unlimited elasticity and simplicity of spirit amongst us, I should look upon the faithfully loving confidence proved in our dear Community as an undeniable miracle of God and His Immaculate Mother."

In spite of her repeated petitions for a General Chapter, the Bishop continually postponed the date of its meeting. The delays went on for more than two years.

At last, in June 1874, he sent a circular letter ordering a General Chapter of the Society to meet on August 17th. The Reverend Mother Cornelia Connelly was then elected Superior-General, and four Assistants were appointed to help her in the government of the Society. After the elections the Chapter reassembled to deliberate upon the Rule. The nuns naturally expected that they would be asked to state their objections to the revised Rule, which had for the moment been laid aside.

But a surprise was in store for them, and an explanation of the delays in summoning this assembly. The Bishop announced that in his great solicitude for the Society he had been engaged for many months in labouring for its welfare. As a result he was now able to present them with *an entirely New Rule*, which would meet all the requirements of Propaganda. It had been a great consolation to him to do this, and he felt certain that its acceptance would put an end to the troubles and unrest

of the past few years. He wished the sisters now to go through the new Rule with him, and to feel themselves perfectly free to express their opinions and propose amendments, if any should occur to them. Still there was an appearance of finality about the large printed volumes in handsome binding, which he now presented to the Mother-General and to each member of the Chapter.

A tense silence reigned in the room—the faces of the nuns alone expressing their amazement. The Bishop proposed to abolish the Rule which they had loved and obeyed for nearly thirty years, and to substitute one which he himself had composed without consulting a single member of the Society.

As the Rule was read amazement deepened into consternation. Its whole tendency was to transform the spirit of the Society. The name of the Holy Child Jesus was almost everywhere expunged, and such terms as "the All-Seeing Judge," "Almighty God" or "Our Redeemer" were employed. All the sweetness and unction of the old Rule was gone. The tone of this was harsh and aggressive, full of rigorous prohibitions. They seemed to be aimed especially against Superiors, and were expressed in terms likely to engender suspicion and distrust. At the head of a complicated system of administration was the Bishop of Southwark, who assumed the title of "Bishop Superior of the Institute." Every matter of consequence in all the convents was to be referred to him, as well as to the Bishop of the Diocese.

The discussions on this Rule lasted for nearly three weeks. Mother Connelly, sitting next to the Bishop, "calmer and more silent than any one present," listened day after day to the destruction of the work of her life. "Pale as death," wrote one who was present; "she seemed to be living in another world." The sisters spoke for her with straightforwardness and simplicity, seeming to guess her thoughts.

Gradually it became clear to the Bishop that his Rule

was not acceptable. This was evidently a great disappointment. On September 4th he closed the Chapter. While expressing his regret that the sisters were unfavourably disposed towards the new Rule, he informed them that they were not at liberty to reject it. They were obliged to adopt it on trial for three years, at the end of which time he would return and hear their opinions.

All through the Chapter Mother Connelly had been most reticent with regard to her own views. To the nuns who individually sought her advice, she merely said " Go to the Chapel and pray—pray." St. Ignatius had calculated the time he would require to resign himself to the annihilation of his Society, and reckoned it at ten minutes. Mother Connelly, questioned by her nuns on the subject, owned to having made the same meditation, but smilingly parried further inquiries. In her private notes she sums up the results of the Chapter, without comment, thus :

" After having suffered the trials, anxieties and responsibilities of the beginning of a Religious Order for twenty-eight years, and these under most unusual sufferings, which faith and trust in God alone could bear, we are now told by the Bishop that we have had no novitiate, and that we are to start afresh on a new Rule ! "

On the closing of the Chapter Mother Connelly had at least the consolation of being able to call together for the first time a duly appointed Council to elect the local Superiors and Assistants. Realising that her duties had been far too strenuous, they appointed a local Superior for St. Leonards, thus freeing Mother Connelly from the government of any particular community, and enabling her to devote herself entirely to the general interests of the Society.

One of her first cares was to make a visitation in the community at ——. There she met with some consolation. She wrote to the Bishop :

" I have seen each sister in this Convent privately, and I am happy to say that each and all bear witness to the charity, order, regularity and peaceful labours of this community."

The troubles were not over. But at least a schism had been averted, religious observance was flourishing, and the originator of discord gone.

After the Chapter the nuns had to accommodate themselves as well as they could to the practice of the new Rule, though Mother Connelly was convinced that the original Rule would one day be restored.

With regard to herself we cannot fail to see the Hand of God working in these last years the final purification of her strong and noble character. The changes in the Rule for which she had been blamed, the defection of the Superior at ——, and now the catastrophe of the Bishop's Rule had shaken her influence in the Society. She had written in a letter long before :

" Accept whatever God sends, whether it be joy or suffering, praise or humiliation, for you know we must consider these as His creatures to lead us to sanctification, and of value to us just as we use them."

And again to a Superior :

" Do not allow your heart to be wounded, and if it is wounded in spite of your efforts, stitch up the wound with the love of God. . . . We do not renounce our good sentiments and heart throbbings, though we try to supernaturalise them and unite them with those of the Heart of Jesus. And oh how much we may console His Heart by our acts of self-renunciation, in accepting all for His sake and in remembering that He wishes us to console Him for the ingratitude of mankind ! Is it not a wonderful thought that He condescends to show us the love of His heart, pointing to it and saying : ' Learn of

Me, for I am meek and humble of heart'? Oh what deep humility in condescending to wish for our love, and in allowing us to console Him and make reparation for the ingratitude of sinners! Who could believe it had He not Himself declared this to us?"

Of her attitude at this time Mother Maria Joseph writes:

"The last sacrifice was the most painful of all, and Mother Connelly's character underwent its last transformation. Crushed and annihilated before men, she annihilated herself more profoundly before God, and in a letter she wrote to me, which I grieve to say has been lost, she expressed herself as receiving only what she deserved, and begged me to pray for her that her pride might be forgiven by God, and that He would spare the Society and accept her as its victim. . . . The calmness and rectitude of her mind never left her, and though she deeply felt the destruction, as she thought, of what had cost her the labour of her religious life, she submitted without hesitation to all the commands of ecclesiastical Superiors."

Her sufferings never destroyed her clear judgment or the beautiful peace which shone upon her countenance. Now, as always, she had strength and consolation to spare for others.

The following are extracts from letters to various sisters which she wrote at this time:

". . . Do not think for a moment about giving me pain personally. I must make myself happy in having my heart pierced and broken. A broken heart is love's cradle when 'our Love is crucified.' Let us bless and thank God for every stroke. . . . Thank God, I am not Superior over any House in particular, and give no orders to any one, and I am personally very happy to have nothing to do but to carry out what is discussed in the

Council and with the Assistants . . . and after these duties to look to my own soul, and to help others, and in time I shall regain fresh strength by the Blessing of Our dear Lord, Who will always be faithful to us if we are faithful to Him."

"You must really look upon the command of the Bishop as the expression of God's most holy Will, and this is not to be doubted. . . . Give my love to the Sisters and tell them they have our heartfelt sympathy in these trials, which we must take in humble resignation to the Divine Will."

"Let us try to gain merit for Eternity, and to judge of things as our good and merciful God judges them. We have all a large share of suffering, and if we had not we should never become Christ-like as we ought."

"I foresaw that the suffering must come, without my being able to ward it off. Offer all to God and ask Him to settle all that may still annoy you, for I have no help for you but through His all-wise Providence. God ever bless you with His own sweetness and loving goodness."

To a Superior in America she writes (February 17th, 1876):

"Be quite sure of this, that I have never altered the Rule of my own will. . . . In the alterations made in the revision at Rome in 1869 I simply obeyed according to Dr. Grant's letter and under Padre Anselmo.

". . . Surely you would never be happy in the thought of going on without the final approbation of Rome. However much we love our old Rule and hold to it, we must love still more the approval of the Sacred Congregation. . . . These are sad troubles, but all Orders have had to go through much the same. . . . Father —— advised me to obey strictly the Rule given by Dr. Danell, and at the end of three years to ask to be exempt from the Ordinary. I am quite certain that the new Rule cannot

work, and as convinced that it will not be approved without change. It is for us to point out our objections and to send them to Rome. But we ought to be very sure of what we are about, and to be very submissive and docile to the decisions of Rome. The humble shall be exalted. If it were God's Will to keep us waiting thirty years longer, we must still say that God's Will is sweeter than even the longed-for approval of the Holy See. . . . Be full of confidence in God and of humble resignation to these crosses, while we must do all that depends upon us for our safety."

Mother Connelly did not allow the sorrows which were wearing out her bodily strength to disturb the serenity of her soul. Amid the trials which made her position so painful she became more gentle, more gracious and calm, more easy of access to all in trouble. Perhaps her heart was now more than ever dwelling in Heaven, since the world had become to her an arid desert, and every green spot of her earthly paradise had been trodden down. She was full of sympathy for others, and of interest in the affairs of the Society. We find her visiting the different houses and even planning new foundations. In the winter of 1875 she was in London helping to install the community in a new temporary home in Nottingham Place. A sister writes that she was "indefatigable in her exertions for their benefit," and full of "the most foreseeing solicitude."

God's blessing was evidently upon her work. To a Superior in America she wrote (March 1876):

"Our temporal affairs never were so flourishing as now, our schools never more lauded, and never so high in numbers and in reputation as at this moment. . . . Again we have never, since giving up the training-school, received so many postulants as this year. Our new and beautiful class-rooms and extra large dormitory are, no

doubt, additional attractions added to the great beauty of our new church, and the new building at Mayfield. . . ."

Mother Maria Joseph gives her impressions of Mother Connelly at this time when the labours and sufferings of the last few years had left visible traces upon her countenance.

" It was a great pleasure to me to be on intimate terms once more with my first Superior and Novice-Mistress, and I bless God for that little time of sweet and holy intercourse—very short, however, and like other things on earth, chequered with sorrow. I may call it my last real community life with Mother Connelly, as when we met again at St. Leonards she was almost, if not quite, confined to her bed. . . .

" My first impression when I saw our beloved Foundress was very sad, and I was much struck with the change that her great trials had wrought in her exterior. Her eyes especially were sunken and had lost much of their brightness, and her whole bearing was much depressed.

" When the first impression had worn off, I began to admire the work of grace in her soul, manifest even to an exterior observer. If she had ever had too great an assumption of authority, and too independent a spirit, all this had gone away, and she was yielding and gentle to everyone in a way that used to fill my eyes with tears. She seemed quite grateful for sympathy, and leaned on us in a way which was most touching when one remembered how all had leaned on her as on a rock, and how her least word used to be received as a command. That the interior work of grace had been transforming and spiritualising what was so noble and admirable, though perhaps excessive, in her natural character into something yet higher in Christian abnegation and humility, I have her own words to testify. She wrote to me in return for a letter of loyal sympathy which I had written to her at

the very worst period of the trial : ' Pray for me, my dear child, that this trial may be blessed to my sanctification, and that I may learn humility from what is so well calculated to humble my pride.'

" That Mother Connelly took all that she had gone through as a trial specially sent to her from God, I can bear full witness. And in all my intercourse with her at this time, which perhaps was the most intimate in my whole life, I never heard her descend to merely human or lower views. She said, and it will be a word cherished by her children in future times, ' Were I not convinced that the thought of founding the Society was not my own but God's I would have given it up long ago. But I cannot give up what He has given me to do.' . . .

" She really felt that the work of her whole life had been to a great degree destroyed. "

The term of three years allotted by the Bishop for the trial of the new Rule drew to a close in the summer of 1877. On August 2nd, Dr. Danell arrived to preside at the General Chapter. After a few preliminaries he called upon the delegates to express their opinions upon the Rule which they had been practising for the last three years. The Bishop turned to the youngest sister present and desired her to speak. Without hesitation she replied firmly and respectfully : " My Lord, it seems to me that the new Rule has been drawn up to correct abuses which never existed, and it does not lead us to love and obey our Superiors."

There was dead silence for a few seconds. Then the Bishop replied, " If that is what you think, you have done no harm in saying so. I wish every one to speak freely." Then as he signed to the next and the next, each expressed similar views. It was clear that the disapproval was decided and universal. The Foundress alone was not asked for her opinion, and therefore did not speak.

The Bishop knew that many of the sisters disliked the

new Rule, but he was not prepared for so unanimous a condemnation of it. Before the first meeting adjourned he declared that in view of the many amendments desired, the Rule must be reconsidered chapter by chapter.

From August 3rd to the 9th the work went on. In candid but respectful speech the sisters brought forward their objections and proposals. The harmony between them was complete.

On the 10th the Bishop presided over the Elections. Mother Connelly was re-elected Superior-General.

It was the concluding session of the Chapter, and the sisters awaited with anxiety the decision of the Bishop.

They had formulated their wishes as follows :

First : That the new Rule should be abrogated.

Secondly : That the old Rule accepted by Propaganda in 1870, with the additions relating to the government of the Society, should be restored.

Thirdly : That an appeal should be made to Rome for an Apostolic Visitor to investigate all that had taken place, to clear away the misunderstanding which had arisen through the secret appeal, and to settle the serious difficulties with the Bishops, who would admit of no interference by the Bishop of Southwark, styled in the new Rule the " Bishop-Superior of the Order."

Once more they were doomed to disappointment. The Bishop, while accepting some proposed amendments, insisted that his Rule, as revised, should again be taken on trial for three years.

CHAPTER XIX

GOING HOME

1876–1879

All thy old woes shall now smile on thee,
And thy pains sit bright upon thee,
All thy sorrows here shall shine,
All thy sufferings be divine.
Tears shall take comfort and turn gems,
And wrongs repent to diadems.
Even thy deaths shall live, and new-
Dress the soul that erst they slew.
Thy wounds shall blush to such bright scars
As keep account of the Lamb's wars.

RICHARD CRASHAW.

THE last foundation which was made personally by Mother Connelly was at Neuilly-sur-Seine, a suburb of Paris, where, in 1876, the community obtained possession of the "Petit Château" of the Duc d'Orléans. She considered this foundation as of great importance. "It is not so much on the good that we shall do to the children here that I count," she used to say, "though it will be great, if we introduce in our school and teaching the gentle spirit of the Holy Child Jesus; but I look forward to great benefit to ourselves from the contact with the French Church. We shall gain far more than we can give." "I wished," she said, "to have a Novitiate House in Rome in order that the true Roman spirit of Catholic devotion might pervade our little Socicty; and now I wish to give the Society a house in Catholic France, where the blood of Martyrs has so lately been shed, and where there is so strong a spirit of fervour and zeal."

One of the sisters relates how she used to walk in the

garden talking of her hopes for the Neuilly convent, saying she trusted that it would be the nursery of many holy souls. It was her intention that as many as possible of the newly professed sisters should go to Neuilly, where they might drink in the true Catholic spirit of devotion and zeal, so hard to realise in a non-Catholic country, and where they might also become proficient in the French language.

On her return to St. Leonards in March 1877, Mother Connelly visited the English houses with a view to encouraging the communities which were depressed and suffering under the "New Rule." At this time she often managed to spend a few days among the novices at Mayfield. To a sister in America she writes (September 26th, 1877):

"I am enjoying the change to Mayfield. The sweet peace and quiet of the country and the lovely air and exquisite weather are enough to restore one to youth and health. . . ."

During the recent years her infirmities had necessitated the use of a bath chair. She would sit in it, under the shade of a walnut tree near the church, surrounded by the novices in their hour of recreation. Many happy memories of those times remain. To her they must have been full of peace and joy. The novices knew nothing of the troubles which were agitating the Society. They cared for nothing but to make themselves less unworthy of the wonderful work to which they were called. Sometimes Mother Connelly would look round on the eager young faces and say: "You are the chosen plants in the garden of the Holy Child—the future of His Society. Are you going to be good nuns?"

The following incident reveals her tenderness for these youngest children of her family. One of the postulants, a timid and shy young girl, used to fear she would never be admitted to profession, and stood in great awe of Mother

Connelly. One day, seeing her drawn in her chair in the garden surrounded by nuns, she sought refuge in flight. The Reverend Mother noticed this and sent for her afterwards. Looking at her with a penetrating gaze which seemed to read her very soul she placed her hand upon her head and said, " My child, have no fear, the Holy Child Jesus wants you for His own. He will keep you safe. He has His little arms round you now." That night the postulant in a sweet dream thought that the Holy Child came to her, and putting a ring upon her finger, espoused her to Himself. From that hour all fears and anxiety about her vocation vanished, never to return—a grace which she has always attributed to the sanctity of the Foundress.

One evening, when there was a glorious sunset, the novices drew Mother Connelly in her chair to the little cemetery, whence a beautiful view could be obtained. After they had watched the sun sink behind the hills, they prayed for the sisters laid to rest. Then Mother Connelly said, " When my turn comes, I wish to be buried here." " Not yet, Mother, not yet," they cried anxiously, for the tone of her voice struck a chill to their hearts. " When God wills," she replied, and then turned to other topics.

By Christmas she was back at St. Leonards, but was soon confined to her room by illness. Her letters were as cheerful as usual. To the sisters in America she writes :

" A very happy New Year to you each and all, and our little Lord's most sweet blessing, with all the graces needed to pass the coming year without a single venial sin committed within the sacred walls of the convent. Oh that it may be so everywhere ! Perfect love will make this very easy to all who are in earnest. For it is possible to live without any wilful sin, though the just man may fall seven times a day. Let us all pray fervently for each other, not forgetting that we have a community in Heaven

waiting for us to join them there. Ah! when shall this be? Before very long for us all.

"Ever your loving Mother in Christ,
C. C."

and again (January 3rd, 1878):

"I hope you are all having a very joyful season, and that the Christmas greetings came in time to wish all the graces and blessings that you each most need and desire.

"I have not been able to leave our room, but the community have had their holidays as usual, and enjoyed them in the usual way by reading and working and games in the evening; some up in our room and some in the community room. Now they are all in retreat . . . and they must all come out Saints.

"Indeed, we need only the perfection of our Common Rules to make us all Saints, and thanks be to God, these are what by the help of God have produced so many Saints that we have only to be faithful to them to secure our sanctification and all that we aim at in the pilgrimage of this valley of tears. Let us love one another and be glad in the rich graces of this holy season of love. *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* May He bless you and give you the loving meekness of His own Heart, and a readiness to sacrifice all your own will and desires for the sake of the perfection and sanctification of others.

"Ever, my dear child,

"Your own loving Mother in J.C.,
"C. C."

By the middle of January she was seriously ill, and on the 20th the doctor pronounced her to be in danger of death. Accordingly she received the Last Sacraments with great fervour and devotion, answering the prayers herself. She was calm and peaceful, resigned to God's Will for life or for death. The thought of death had always been sweet to her, and she seemed to have no fear.

Her oldest children, Mother Mary Ignatia Bridges and Mother Maria Joseph Buckle, longed to see her once more. They were summoned from Neuilly.

Mother Maria Joseph writes :

" We found the beloved invalid had rallied, and I was struck with the change in her outward appearance. All her old beauty had returned, and she looked as she used to look many years ago, especially her eyes, which were beautifully bright. But there was on her face the heavenly look of departure we can never mistake, and a peace passing understanding about her whole manner and words.

" Immediately she interested herself about my health and seemed as much concerned at my ill looks as if she had not been ill herself. . . . I was touched by her kindness and was also struck by her unselfish forgetfulness of her own sufferings and the constant thought she evinced for others."

But the end was not yet at hand. Slowly and gradually the invalid regained a measure of strength, though she was rarely free from pain.

On Easter Sunday, 1878, she was able to go to the church for Mass, for the first time since her illness. Though her body was weak, her mind remained vigorous, with all its old power, and her senses were as keen as ever. All the joys and sorrows of the Society were her own. One of her last anxieties was the school at Neuilly, which was not yet prospering. She wrote to the Superior :

" Do not worry over temporals. You will see that Our Lord will do everything if we do our best. There would not be one of our convents on the face of the earth if we had not trusted to Our Lady of Sorrows, next to God's Providence. Make a novena to her with fervour that she may fill your school with good children. We depend on her help for God's blessing on the House, and you must be full of confidence in God and diffidence in yourselves."

This foundation—which she called her Benjamin—was very dear to Mother Connelly's heart, and she was ready to make great sacrifices to keep it. She wrote to a sister at Neuilly :

" The dear children are always in my heart, though there are very few of them that I know. If I have never seen them it is always the same. May they learn the joy of loving the God Who died for us and of being happy in the convent where He dwells in His most loving form of Holy Childhood."

By the summer she was able to be moved to Mayfield, which she seemed to love more and more. But in spite of beautiful weather and quiet days, while everything was done to preserve her strength, it was clear that the end was approaching. Time after time she would brace herself up, and make efforts to join the community and to take up the responsibilities of her office. For two or three days she would bravely struggle on, and then a fresh attack would prostrate her once more. As the autumn passed into winter it became increasingly apparent that her vitality was on the decline.

Before Christmas she returned to St. Leonards, and all were deeply affected when, embracing the sisters in the community room, she stopped and looking round upon them again said : " I never thought that I should have seen you all here again."

It was evident that her thoughts dwelt lovingly on all her children, not only on those in England, but on those who were so far away in her dear native land. On December 12th she wrote to a sister in America :

" A very happy Christmas to you all, and many of them, each more holy than the last. You must know that I think I am oftener with you in spirit than you can well imagine. You know our window looks to the west, and

the sunset takes me directly across the great ocean, where you are, no doubt, fast asleep and not thinking of me."

Christmas Day came, and she was unable to hear any of the Masses, but she received Holy Communion in her cell. In spite of this she would allow nothing to be omitted from the usual customs to keep up the joyful spirit of this, the Society's greatest feast. She was always bright and hopeful. To America she wrote (January 12th, 1879):

"I am going to take again the water of Lourdes, that if God wills me to be of any use I may regain my strength and go to America to see you all, for which I must get leave, being now nearly seventy years of age."

But a few days later she was again seriously ill, and this time it was evident that the end could not be far off. February passed and March. Mother Connelly was confined to her bed, and her strength was failing. She was now suffering from virulent eczema, besides her other ailments. Her bodily suffering was great, but her mind remained clear as ever, and her soul dwelt in peace beneath the Hand of God, as, with the shadows deepening around, her brave spirit prepared for the last great venture of death.

Over forty years of spiritual experience lay behind her as she looked down the vista of her life. Through all the crowded interests and anxieties of the difficult years her great ideal had remained uneclipsed. This was the measure of her life's achievement—not the souls she had gathered together and taught the higher paths of love, not the sanctuaries she had set up and her children had tended, not the thousands of little ones whom they had taught and trained, not the higher standard to which Catholic education had been raised, but the one great fact that, in light and darkness, in storm and calm, she had known and loved and served her God, that the governing factor in her

life had always been His Will, and that the precious casket of her heart had been broken at His Feet.

When repeating her favourite motto, "*Dieu seul*," her face became radiant with ecstatic love. She had not lost her beautiful voice, and after Holy Communion, when she was left alone, the sisters used to hear her singing the *Adoro Te* and other favourite hymns, especially "O Jesus, hidden God, I cry to Thee." One of them wrote:

"It was very touching to hear our Mother, in spite of intense bodily suffering, pouring out her soul to God in the way she had loved to do in life, in strains of sweetest music. She seemed almost to be in an ecstasy of joy at possessing Him once more."

Her physical sufferings were now extreme, but her strong bright spirit seemed to be renewed, and to be able to rise above them all. To the end she kept the cheerfulness, and even at times the gaiety which had always formed such an attractive feature of her sanctity. All anxiety seemed to have left her. When a sister expressed her hope that Our Lord would spare her to complete her work, she replied, "No, I have begun it, but others will bring it to its perfection." Several times she spoke of the Rule, and it seemed as if Our Lord were rewarding her trust, by lifting from her eyes the veil which hid the future. She often said, in a tone of certain conviction, "Our Rule will be given back to us one day, to the letter."

Her devotion to God's Will and her absolute trust in His mercy were striking at all times, but increased as the end drew near. "Doing the Will of God is the only happiness and the only thing worth living for," she often said: and her voice and manner showed clearly that she was expressing a truth which had become as the very breath of her life. Mother Mary Ignatia Bridges, writing a few days later to an absent sister, says: "You have escaped much in not having witnessed her great suffering,

though no one would have valued more the privilege of being with her. It seems as if the full perfection of her beautiful character had never shown itself till now."

On April 14th she was anointed, for the second time in her long illness. In the evening she was thought to be unconscious, and the Reverend Father Hogan said the last prayers over her. As soon as they were ended, to the astonishment of all, she opened her eyes, and turning them towards the Father, said : " Thank you, Father, for all you have done for me. I hope I shall be able to make you a return later." On the 16th she made her Communion for the Jubilee granted by the new Pontiff. It was her last Communion.

For several days she had seldom spoken, and at times it was difficult to know whether she was conscious or not. The eczema had now spread over her whole body, not sparing even her face, and giving her the appearance of one scalded from head to foot. Like her Divine Master, she became as a leper, and there was no comeliness in her during these last days of agony. The day before she died a sister was trying to ease the irritation caused by the disease, when Mother Connelly struck one hand with the other three times, repeating each time with intense conviction, " In this flesh I shall see my God." This was on Thursday in Easter week. At midnight the last change took place. At six in the morning all the sisters were summoned to her cell to pray. Father Hogan was sent for, and remained until the hour of Mass, giving her the absolution and saying the last prayers. During the Mass the sisters remaining with her watched in the hope that she might again rally sufficiently to receive our dear Lord once more. But this was not to be. Father Hogan returned to the bedside after Mass and gave her the great Franciscan Plenary Indulgence *in articulo mortis*. Her expression brightened when Mother Teresa asked whether she would like the sisters to sing the hymn, ' My God, I love Thee.' This was sung as well as the *Suscipe* and parts

of other hymns. But she appeared to have become unconscious.

All the morning of this last day those sisters who could be freed from duties in the school were either praying in the church or on their knees outside her room. A few were able to be beside the bed. The silence was broken only by her laboured breathing and by the prayers which from time to time were said aloud.

At last the bell for Office rang, and the sisters went to recite Vespers and Compline. Those who remained saw then that the end was very near. The priest pronounced the solemn words, "Go forth, Christian Soul," whilst someone held the crucifix to her lips and another sprinkled holy water around.

And now a wonderful thing happened. All the pure spiritual beauty of her face that God had given to her, and had taken away that she might the more resemble Christ, was given back at this last hour. The disfigurement caused by the disease passed away, and her countenance shone like a vision of peace in the great dawn of death.

It was about a quarter to one in the afternoon of Easter Friday, April 18th, and the community were finishing Compline, when God called her soul away. She was seventy years, three months and three days old, and it was the anniversary of the day on which, thirty-three years before, she had gone forth from Rome to take up her appointed task. God had accepted her holocaust and had left her, like her divine Master, deprived of all consolation. She was bearing her lifelong family sorrows, for her children were still outside the Church of their Baptism, and she was leaving her religious children deprived of their original Rule.

Not in a blaze of glory do the Saints die as a rule. To those who are chosen to share in a special way the sufferings of Christ He grants companionship with Himself in Gethsemane and on Calvary. In the eyes of the world, and even of good men, their declining years may look sad, and

their work may fall unfinished from failing hands. But within, the likeness to the Master grows and is perfected and "it hath not yet appeared what [they] shall be. We know that when He shall appear [they] shall be like to Him because [they] shall see Him as He is."

Mother Connelly had often expressed the wish that she might be buried at Mayfield, where she had established the novitiate, and which she hoped would become the Mother House of the Society. Accordingly, on the Monday in Low week her body was conveyed to Mayfield. Through that night the novices watched in prayer beside their Mother, and the next morning, on a mild spring day, she was laid to rest in the tiny cemetery, with the violets and primroses growing near, and the little birds she had loved to feed chirping in the trees above.

To that hallowed spot come successive generations of novices to meditate upon, and if it may be to assimilate something of the brave and loving spirit which is their Mother's legacy to them, while the words upon her tombstone rise to their lips:

AVE ET VALE BONA MATER, VIVE IN DEO
MEMOR NOSTRUM
QUAS DOMINO GENUISTI.

AFTERWORD

Mother Connelly had departed this life leaving her work not only incomplete, but in a most precarious state as regards the Rule. She had always affirmed, in so positive a way as to impress some of her hearers with a belief in her supernatural knowledge, that the old Rule of the Society would one day be restored.

The year after her death, Mother Angelica Croft was elected Superior-General. Mother Connelly had designated her as her successor, and the unanimous votes of the Chapter confirmed her choice. It was then decided that a certain space should be allowed to elapse before again appealing to Rome on the subject of the Rule. The death of Dr. Danell in 1881 paved the way. He was succeeded by Bishop Coffin. But the chief obstacle was removed by the death of Pierce Connelly in 1883. After this event the Society received formal notice from Propaganda that a renewed request for the approbation of the Rule would now be considered.

Two General Assistants were accordingly sent to Rome. But again obstacles intervened, and they were told that the Rules must be remodelled. All the distinctive Rules of St. Ignatius, if accepted at all, would have to be relegated to a Customal or Directory.

The matter looked hopeless. But at this crisis a new friend arose to protect the Society. The Jesuit Cardinal Mazella had known the sisters in America and had sympathised with the difficulties of their situation. Quite unexpectedly, and almost as if by special inspiration, he now took up the cause of the Society. He placed Father Cardella, S.J. on the Committee of Consultors and ordered

him to carry the Rule through for approbation. Father Cardella threw himself whole-heartedly into the difficult task. He wrote to the Mother General: "You have proved the Society's loyal obedience to the Holy See in the work done in Rome, but the Holy Spirit will have all that work changed if *ad majorem Dei gloriam*." After a long correspondence with the Mother-General, in which he ascertained the real wishes of the Society, he boldy presented for approval the original Rule. Mother Connelly must have been aiding him by her prayers in heaven. Not a single sentence was rejected.

The "Approbation for Five Years" was obtained from the Pope on August 7th, 1887, and on the following day the news was telegraphed to the Society. On May 13th, 1888, Father Cardella wrote:

"You have received extraordinary favours by the Decree. Generally three Decrees are given: First, a Decree of praise of the pious end and general plan of the new Institute, without saying anything in particular of the Constitutions. Second, after some time, a Decree of praise and approbation, with correction of the Constitutions *ad decennium or septennium*. Third, a final Decree of approbation.

"It is something like the Decrees in the process of canonisation: First a Decree which confers the title of Venerable, second the Decree of Beatification, third the Decree of Canonisation. So we may say that your Rules have been declared at once both Venerable and Blessed, and after five years, so to say, will be canonised. Considering especially that your Society has been established so long, we asked that the two ordinary decrees should be merged, so to say, into one, and it was granted. We asked also that instead of ten, or at least seven years, only five years should be fixed for the final approbation, and it was granted. . . .

"I unite with you in thanking God for your beautiful

Rule, and beg . . . that its faithful copy may be found in the daily life of each one of you. . . . I may add that your Rule was praised unanimously by the Committee as one of the very best proposed for approbation."

The restoration of their beloved Rule brought back peace and unity to the Society. The Lord had bestowed upon it this grace, that the elders had kept to themselves the troubles that overclouded the Order, and the young sisters went their way in peace knowing very little of what was passing. Gradually, under the Rule that she had loved so much, the strong, sweet spirit of their Foundress came back upon them, and her children rejoiced in their inheritance.

On May 12th, 1893, Pope Leo XIII deigned to approve in all things the Rules and Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, and to command a Decree of Final Approbation to be published.

To this favour was added a solemn Brief in July 1893 praising the Society and confirming and securing the Rules and Constitutions "in perpetuity by the strength of our Apostolic Sanction."

APPENDIX

And since the Church in her divine universality encourages the means of education best adapted for each particular state of life, we are especially bound to act in unison with her, and to meet the wants of the age, while leading our children to true piety and solid virtue.—*Rule, S.H.C.J.*

It will be interesting to trace very briefly the manner in which the Society of the Holy Child Jesus is interpreting to-day the educational ideals of its Foundress and the attitude which it assumes towards modern educational problems.

Much of the age-long war which surges round education has been and will be concerned with the question whether its object should be primarily individual or social; whether the process of education should be aimed at developing all the powers innate in each child, so that his personality may become as brilliant, active and successful as possible, or at subordinating individual to social requirements, so that he may prove as useful as possible to the State of which he is a member. Though these aims are not necessarily antagonistic, extremists on both sides have made them appear so. According as one theory or other has prevailed we have seen the rise of such educational systems as those advocated by Montaigne, Rousseau, Froebel and Montessori, and the Dalton Plan, where the individual has been the main interest, or, on the other hand, the co-operative forms of school work which, under various names, have lately become conspicuous in America and are being imitated in England.

The Catholic Church alone stands above all vicissitudes of conflicting theories, and with the wisdom which has been bestowed upon her as the teacher of nations has

perfectly understood and consistently taught the true function of education.

Each child is an individual soul, ransomed with the Precious Blood, brother of angels, heir of God and co-heir with Christ. Therefore no trouble is too great, no service too lowly, which may develop his possibilities. So much for the individualistic side. But the other side is complementary to it and of equal importance. No cog-wheel or screw in the machinery of any State is this child of God to be. Individualism gives way, not to necessity, but to love, and each one must glory in being a member of the Body of Christ and of one another. " So we being many are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another " (Rom. xii. 5).

In these two complementary doctrines we find the solution of all social problems and of education. Every well-educated Catholic child receives the most careful individual training, first in the family, then at school, in the First Communion class, and even, we may say, in the confessional, yet each one is led to appreciate the fact that he does not stand alone, but, as a member of Christ, has relations with and duties towards every other member. The consciousness of this truth is borne in upon him daily in a hundred ways.

It is not claiming too much for Mother Connelly to say that she grasped with wonderful precision both the Catholic view of education and its practical application in a country like England, where the influence of women for good is practically boundless.

She laid the foundations of her educational system broad and deep, but she did not define too rigidly the structure which was to be raised upon them. Three principles she formulated which, wisely interpreted, would supply guidance for all time. The Society in its educational functions was to act in unison with the Church, to meet the wants of the age, and to lead children to true piety and solid virtue. Thus we have submission to ecclesias-

tical authority, progressive adaptability and moral stability. It is the second of these points on which we need here especially to dwell.

Mother Connelly assisted in her own day at the resumption of social activity by Catholics. For centuries Catholic girls in England had been debarred from adequate education. The crying need of the age was to fit them to take their place usefully in society, and to impress upon them the culture which till then had necessarily been widely sacrificed for the sake of religious training. These aims were successfully compassed, first in the school at St. Leonards and then in the other schools founded during her lifetime both in England and in America.

The present age offers different problems. It demands an education that will fit the modern woman to take her part in political as well as in social activities, and the necessity of meeting these requirements was clearly fore seen and provided for by Mother Connelly.

In the secondary schools of her Society in England, and in its High Schools and Academies in America, every care is taken to teach those subjects which will qualify girls for a future career, and to give them, even at school, an intelligent interest in current events and in the welfare of others.

But the most critical years of a girl's life are often not her school years but those which immediately follow them. If this period, in which she is emancipated from school discipline and begins to feel her liberty, can be spent under Catholic supervision, many of its dangers will pass her harmlessly by. It is with this view that the Society has established a Hostel for students at St. Frideswide's, Oxford, and a College at Rosemont, Pennsylvania, chartered by the State, with power to confer Degrees in Arts, Science and Letters. The work done in these two establishments is identical in object and is guided by the same general principles, but they differ in organisation and methods. St. Frideswide's shares in the inter-

collegiate system of lectures and tuition in vogue at Oxford. Its undergraduates attend the different Colleges for lectures, but while they take their full part in the intellectual and social life of the University, they enjoy the safeguards and privileges of living in a convent, with daily Mass and the continual Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, besides the opportunity of consulting Catholic tutors and lecturers in their difficulties.

American Colleges are far more self-contained than those in Europe. As a rule they are independent establishments chartered by the State and empowered to grant Degrees by the same authority. They possess resident faculties, the members of which do not usually lecture or teach in other educational institutions, and they are highly centralised both as regards discipline and administration. It follows that the intellectual and spiritual ideals of the leaders exercise a proportionately greater influence over the students, and the need for Catholic Colleges such as Rosemont is the more imperative.

The Houses of Study established by the Society at Rome, Paris and Fribourg are at present less closely connected with University work, though the students of the two last attend certain courses at the Universities. They offer to girls who wish to complete their education abroad the same advantages of a Catholic atmosphere and a happy prolongation of their convent life under freer conditions than are possible at school.

Another great need of the time is a supply of Catholic teachers. Recent legislation in England has gradually encouraged the schools to absorb much of what was formerly considered to belong to home life. The amusements, the employment of leisure hours, and even the health of children are now largely cared for by school authorities. It is obvious that as the school enlarges its sphere of influence, it becomes increasingly important that the Catholic teachers shall be well trained and fitted for their task. The Training College conducted by the

Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus at Cavendish Square in London has been engaged in training Catholic teachers for Secondary schools since its foundation in 1896.

In other fields there is the same need for preparation. The christianisation of economic relationships is the only antidote to the evils of an ungodly socialism and the revolutionary spirit which is rife in the world to-day. The more intelligent children of the industrial classes will be the political leaders of the future. The women who teach in elementary schools or take their places in the business centres of the great towns will possess immense power for good or evil, and the direction of this power will depend largely upon the training they receive at school. Rightly trained, they will be able to uphold Christian principles in political and economic life, and by acting upon public opinion, to bring that opinion into harmony with the teaching of Christ. The Society has earnestly striven to meet this need both in England and in America. In its elementary and parochial schools, and in the business training courses for elder girls at Sundridge in England, and at Melrose, Massachusetts, in America, it makes every effort to inculcate the Catholic ideals which are the only cure for the evils of the day. Another opportunity for the same apostolate is to be found in the large State-aided Secondary school at Preston, in England, whose special importance lies in the fact that the majority of its pupils enter the teaching profession, and thus multiply indefinitely the influence of their own education.

In all the schools and colleges under the care of the Society the Sisters endeavour in various ways to impress upon their pupils their responsibilities towards the Church and the poor. The children in the English schools are taught to take an interest in foreign missions, as well as in the social work of the " Holy Child Settlement " in the East End of London, which is worked mainly by their own " Old Girls." In America the Christ Child Associa-

tion for Alumnae, and its junior branch for the school children, the Tabernacle Societies, the Sodalities and the retreats for various organisations, all work towards the same end.

Thus the spirit of Mother Connelly lives on in her Society, and her educational system shows the vitality which enables it to keep pace with " the wants of the age " without sacrificing the more spiritual aims for which the Society was primarily founded.

CONVENTS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS, 1924

MOTHER HOUSE:

Rome (Via Boncompagni)	Founded 1923

ENGLISH PROVINCE:

* Mayfield	„ 1863
* St. Leonards-on-Sea	„ 1848
† London (Cavendish Square)	„ 1851
* Preston (Winckley Square)	„ 1853
* Blackpool (Layton Hill)	„ 1856
† Mark Cross (now Combe Bank, Sundridge, Kent)	„ 1863
† Paris (Neuilly-sur-Seine) Founded 1877, closed 1904	Reopened 1921
Harrogate	Founded 1896
Oxford	„ 1902
Fribourg, Switzerland	„ 1923

EASTERN PROVINCE, U.S.A.:

* Sharon Hill, Pa.	„ 1864
* Philadelphia (Spring Garden Street)	„ 1863
* Philadelphia (St. Leonards House)	„ 1868
Philadelphia (St. Edward's)	„ 1889
New York (Riverside Drive)	„ 1904
Melrose, Mass.	„ 1909
Suffern	„ 1912
Rosemont, Pa.	„ 1921
Summit, N. Jersey	„ 1923

MIDDLE WEST PROVINCE, U.S.A.

Chicago, Ill.	„ 1909
Cheyenne, Wyo.	„ 1884
Chicago (St. Veronica's)	„ 1908
Portland, Ore.	„ 1913
Waukegan, Ill.	„ 1920

* Founded on the present site during the lifetime of Mother Connelly.

† Founded during the lifetime of Mother Connelly, but transferred later to the present site.

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